

# Christian Orient

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# CHRISTIAN ORIENT

An Indian Journal of Eastern Churches for Creative  
Theological Thinking

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## ECUMENISM

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# Editorial

## Ecumenism in Practice

His Holiness Pope John Paul II in his letter of May 28, 1987 to the Catholic Bishops in India has invited all the Catholics in India to unity and communion. There he pointed out that this unity of the Universal Church is a unity in diversity and not a unity in uniformity. Thus, he says, the Church can be a sign of unity of mankind so often divided by ethnic, political, cultural and linguistic rivalries. The Pope dissociated the diversity of rites or worship, from the elements which divided the people. On the other hand, "let us continue", he says, "to reflect on the Churches or Rites which make up her variety in unity". He urges that "there is need for the closest possible communion and collaboration between the different Rites in India."

In a pluralistic and diversified land like India, the Church has to be a sign of unity, communion and love. And this witnessing must be as indicated by His Holiness in his letter: respecting the legitimate ecclesial traditions and giving chance to the Indians to come to know of the diversity in the Catholic Church, and teaching people to live harmoniously and peacefully in a pluralistic society and tolerating one another. The Catholics must be shining examples of this tolerance. Our ultimate goal, however, is to present our Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood has been shed for us and for many in India.

There was some sort of tension in the inter-ecclesial relations in India for some time. The three churches presented their view points in a sincere attitude of brotherly charity to the legitimate authorities. After considering the various aspects of the question and the "Indian Reality," the Pope as the Supreme Visible Pastor of the Universal Church, has sent his letter. The Pope has clarified that the Catholic Church stands for justice, reconciliation and unity, and the demands of the Orientals are legitimate and in accordance with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. The President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India also has positively endorsed it and written to the Catholic Bishops in India that the letter must be implemented in its detail and he has sought the collaboration of all the bishops to "educate and form our priests, religious and faithful to accept fully and cooperate in its implementation."

The letter has accepted a few basic facts: that the Oriental Catholic Churches must continue as Churches in India; that they must not be restricted but must be permitted to grow organically in India; that the Catholic Church in no way fosters uniformity in the life of the church; that the church stands for pluriformity in its life; that the fear of some people in Indian Catholicism that the growth of one church may hinder the growth of another church is



unfounded; that the Universal church does not stand for the "One Rite Movement" and that the outdated law, "one territory, one bishop, and one jurisdiction" cannot stand in the Indian ecclesial reality; and that there must be the closest unity and communion between the various churches in India.

Now it is the duty of every catholic in India to follow wholeheartedly the letter of the Pope, which he wrote "after much prayer and reflection." The priests, religious and faithful have to be educated to accept it and cooperate fully in its implementation. Since several catholics were so far educated to live in a uniform type of Catholicism, the Holy Father is asking for a reeducation. Thus each one will be educated to accept others: the other Catholic Churches, the other liturgical traditions and the other ways of thinking and theologizing. All must put an end to the interritual discussions and try very earnestly to implement the letter of the Pope in its detail. The Pope has very seriously considered the Indian Reality and it is the duty of every Catholic of the different traditions to accept it and implement it, so that we may present a united Catholicism, a united witnessing to our Lord Jesus Christ.

All Catholics in India of all the three ecclesial traditions or Rites are thus, in concrete, ensured that they can worship God in the way in which they want. This is ecumenism in practice at home. The speedy implementation of this letter will enhance confidence in the Roman leadership in the eyes of the non-Catholics also. Although some may pass judgement that there is nothing new in the papal letter, it is an epoch making document, especially in the light of the interritual discussions in India in the last few years. From the Oriental part, we fully endorse the document and we confidently hope that it will put an end to all antiecclesial discussions. We promise the closest possible communion and collaboration with our Latin brethren in India. We hope that the Catholic Seminaries, Faculties and theologians in India will take seriously the invitation of the Pope and educate the future Catholic leaders in India in accordance with the directives given in the letter, so that the future Catholics may be able to live in a pluralistic society, accepting the diversities in the Church with concord and tolerance.

Editor

Geevarghese Chediath

R. I. P.



Rev. Fr. Thomas Vellilamthadam  
(1941 - 1987)

We the Editorial Board of the Christian Orient gratefully acknowledge the great services rendered by Rev. Dr. Thomas Vellilamthadam our Review Editor. Quite unexpectedly he left us for his eternal reward on the 22nd of November 1987, leaving behind the fond memory of a committed and inspiring champion for the noble cause of the Catholicity of the Church which consists in the communion of Churches with equal rights and obligations.



## A Loving Homage to Fr. Thomas Vellilamthadam

Rev. Dr. Thomas Vellilamthadam of venerable memory passed away on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1987. His unexpected and sad demise has immersed all his friends and colleagues in deep sorrow and it has in fact created a real vacuum which is very difficult to be filled. This small article is an attempt to assess some of the brilliant aspects of his great and dazzling personality as a loving homage to that great and noble soul.

Fr. Thomas Vellilamthadam was born at Monipally, Kerala, India on December 8, 1941. After his minor seminary course at Good Shepherd Seminary, Palai, he pursued his philosophical studies at the catholic university of Louvain, Belgium. After having finished his licentiate in philosophy at the Universite catholique de Louvain, he continued his academic studies at propaganda De Fide college in Rome where he obtained Licentiate in Theology. He was ordained priest on May 8 1969. He did his doctoral studies at Louvain and in 1973 took his Ph. D. in philosophy defending a thesis on "The concept of Repression in Herbert Marcuse."

From 1975 onwards he was professor of philosophy at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary (Pontifical Oriental Institute of Religious Studies-Paurastya Vidyapitham) Kottayam, India, and head of the department of philosophy in the same institute from 1986 onwards. He was a member of the Indian philosophical Congress, Review editor of the Christian Orient, and the associate editor of Jeevadhara. He had also served as visiting professor in many

Indian seminaries like St John's seminary, Hyderabad and Dharmaram college, Bangalore.

As my friend and colleague, I know Fr. Thomas Vellilamthadam for the last 12 years. He was just, faithful and loving. Jollity and merth never failed to accompany him; in fact it was so till his last moments. It may look paradoxical that this quality combined well with his high thinking. In more than one way, he had distinguished himself. He was a true philosopher - an original thinker, a very powerful writer, an ardent champion of the cause of the orientals, especially of the Malabar Church, an excellent professor, a person well informed about the Indian society and the third world problems and above all a loving and caring priest and a friend to all the inmates of this Institute. What is said of the young English poet John Keats may be truly said of him: that he loved the principle of beauty in all things. High thinking and simple living characterized this young philosopher too.

His early intellectual and philosophical formation at the famous Louvain university and the later advanced research and study in the same university had great influence in the making of this philosopher. His wide and extensive travels through the cities and villages of India together with his systematic reading brought him in touch with the cultural, sociological, anthropological, economical and religious problems of this country. No wonder aseries of books in this line were published<sup>1</sup>.

1. Maya Safari, Maya Gallop, Maya Oasis, From the Burning Sands, Chilly Sauce are some of the books in this category.



Fr. Vellilamthadam was a person deeply interested in the social teaching of the church. He had clear vision and understanding of what the church marked out in this line through the Encyclical Letters of the Popes. Social questions regarding workers, Labour, Management and other related issues drew his attention. His book on 'Man and Social Problems' is the outcome of his great interest in this area.

All his works bear ample testimony to the fact that Fr. Vellilamthadam was a powerful writer. Read any of his work, and the reader will be impressed by his indepth knowledge of the subject he deals with and his unshaking conviction on the matter under consideration. He has edited and authored a wide variety of books to his credit<sup>2</sup> and I am cock sure that they will continue to outlive him. He has also contributed many valuable articles to Christian Orient and other standard periodicals and journals. Forget the man you may but one can reconstruct his genius and vision from his powerful writings. Style is the man, we say. Undaunted and uncompromising he was where principles are at stake, where justice is denied, and where positive growth is obstructed and in all these places one can find his expressions turning vibrant and powerful—a prophetic tone! Sometimes even in the face of acute negative criticisms Fr. Thomas held his ground and wrote fearlessly, knowing well that he was speaking nothing but the truth. This is true whether it was about the dark and bright aspects of the Indian society, the third world problem, the planetarian domination, the freedom fighters of Thomas christians, the Latin connection of Indian catholicism, or any philosophical, theological and socio-political questions.

He was an ardent champion of the causes oriental and especially of his own church the Syro-Malabar Church. He told me once that a serious reading of Paremmakkal's Varthamanappusthakam, did really trigger in him a lot of thoughts about the present situation of our church in India. His thirst to know the history and identity of our church there after increased greatly. It was his great ambition as a true son of the Malabar church, to conscientize our people of our ancient heritage and the sad predicament in which we find our church today. Certainly he has succeeded in this attempt to a certain extent. This will be all the more clear when one thinks of the short span of life which Almighty God had graciously given him. His deep veneration and grateful feelings towards Mar Cariattil and Paremmakkal down to Fr. Placid CMI of happy memory are worth mentioning. His sense of deep satisfaction and joy at the hazardous endeavours that Paurastya Vidyapitham undertakes for our church was always keenly felt in his conversations.

The seminarians and the colleagues revere him as an excellent professor. Socratic method of teaching was to his best taste. This he mentions in his own work "Greek Wisdom". His classes were very lively. He was teaching subjects like History of Greek philosophy, Philosophy of Man, Theory of knowledge and Abnormal psychology. Students were made to think and learn rather than merely to store informations in memory. It is true that the beginners would find his classes a bit tough as they are compelled to think, but they continue to love his classes as they slowly get at it. Soon after they realize that the prize of wisdom is above rubies.

2. His works include, Man and Social Problems, Tomorrow's Society, Marcuse and Freud on civilization; Greek Wisdom; The Spectre of Being; Despair, Hope and Bliss; (Ed.), The Freedom Fighters of Thomas Christians (ed.) and several other books and articles.

His service mentality is widely acclaimed both by the professors and students. He never denies any service or help asked of him by others. He would even go to the extent of doing a service without being explicitly asked for it. I would think that it is here that his character best aligns with his priestly mission. To serve others was a pleasure for him and he did it in such a nice and sweet manner. It is to be remembered that his service branched off into different types, encouragements and help of different types: intellectual, educational, social, financial etc. So many students have developed their interest in reading serious books, writing articles, and going deep into the roots of our spiritual patrimony, after they came in contact with the charming personality of Fr. Vellilamthadam.

Fr. Vellilamthadam was always a cheerful person. This is a fact that any one would agree without any reservation. And he proved to be so to his last day. Even when he was suffering from serious back pain a couple of days before his death, this cheerful disposition never left him. He used to crack jokes as if nothing had happened to him and he was a person who knew how to take a joke well and laugh at himself. He was always willing to have fun at his own expense. Many of

his colleagues and friends have reaped such a rich harvest of his jolly good nature and loving attitude. He could not stop loving us, come what may in the world around us. He would be telling us in the words of W. H. Auden "I'll love you till the ocean is folded and hung up to dry/ And the seven stars go squawking/ Like geese about the sky.

Fr. Vellilamthadam enjoys a place of preeminence in the hearts of his students. The wisdom he has imparted and his example of hard work, serious study and realistic attitude to life and the love and genuine concern for his mother church and above all the poor and needy, would always be a source of inspiration for his friends and students. His cheerful spirit and sense of selfless service are good examples for all of us. To be always his good friends, let us continue to remember him in our prayers:

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:

The Lord make his face shine upon thee

and be gracious unto thee:

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace"

(Numbers 6 : 24)

Fr. Sebastian Kalacherry



# The Malankara Catholic Church: Its Ecumenical Role

## Introduction

One of the most striking points in the Ecclesiology propounded by Vatican Council II, is its affirmation that the Church is a Communion<sup>1</sup>. It is on the basis of this sound ecclesiological vision that the various individual apostolic Churches are getting more and more aware of their own individuality and autonomy, without losing sight of the need of their essential communion and intimate union with the Holy Apostolic See of Rome.

In the past, especially after the great divisions in the Church, when the Catholic Church was practically consisting only of the Western Latin Church, this essential feature of Catholicity of the Church was dimly visible, though theologically defensible. Once the Movements of Re-union with the Apostolic See of Rome started, especially from the 16th and 17th centuries, and as the Apostolic Oriental Churches regained their ecclesial communion with the Apostolic Church of Rome, the Catholic face of the church was once again shining forth, which has highlighted the universality of the redeeming function of the Church.

In fact, it is the actual presence of the Western and Eastern Catholic Churches in the big Catholic Communion, presided over by the Bishop of the Apostolic See of Rome, that made this truth of Catholicity a real ecclesial experience. Against the back-

ground of this ecclesial experience articulated in the proclamations and teachings of the Vat. II Council, it is easy to study and evaluate the ecclesial position and mission of the various individual Churches in the Catholic Communion.

We focus our attention on the Malankara Catholic Church and its ecumenical role within the wider context of its ecclesial mission as an individual apostolic Church in the Catholic Communion.

The Malankara Catholic Church, is to be understood as part of the ancient Malankara Church, that traces its origin to the preaching of St. Thomas, the Apostle. Retaining its apostolicity and identity as an ecclesial community and regaining its communion with the Holy See of Rome, after its rupture in the 17th century, it has established itself as an individual Church in the Catholic Communion. During the past fiftyseven years of its communion in the Catholic Church, the Malankara Catholic Church could grow up considerably and establish its position as an Individual Church, regaining its vitality and spiritual strength. Growing as a Vigorous Christian Community, the Malankara Catholic Church at present consists of 3 Dioceses, about 300,000 Faithful, 800 churches and mission centres, 400 priests and about 900 Religious. As part of an ancient Christian Community of India, it is deeply rooted in the spiritual traditions and cultural

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1. Cf. Lumen Gentium: Nos. 23, 26, 28.



values of India. The Holy See of Rome has recognised it and acknowledged it as such and the present Holy Father has confirmed it: "In your persons I greet and embrace two individual Churches, unique in character two Churches witnessing to two ancient, distinct, yet complementary forms of oriental Christianity; two Churches rooted in the Indian soil and adapted to the Indian way of life, living in peace and harmony with their neighbours who are overwhelmingly of another religious tradition. It has been solemnly affirmed that the oriental Churches, "distinguished as they are by their venerable antiquity, are bright with that tradition which comes from the Apostles through the Fathers (OE. 1). And We know that you are linked to the Apostles through the living tradition of your Churches and through ecclesial reality that embodies it, notably, your liturgy, ecclesiastical discipline, and whole spiritual heritage. At the same time your ecclesial tradition forms part of the Indian reality and is inseparable from it"<sup>2</sup>.

#### Malankara Catholic Church and Ecumenism

The spirit of ecumenism that is pervading now all Christian Churches and communities, can be regarded as a special gift of God, bestowed on the divided Christianity. For, it is this spirit that has already become a forceful movement in the Church, that remedies at least in a small degree the scandal of division in the people of God.

To assess the role of the Malankara Catholic Church in ecumenism as its God-given task and special vocation, we need to have a deeper understanding of the nature and aim of the ecumenical movement and the goals of ecumenical activities.

Ecumenism is often mistaken for a complacent co-existence of different Christian Churches in their state of division and disunity or in their present positions that contradict each other. It is neither a discrete method of unification and absorption of local Churches on the basis of might and power, nor a risky method of dilution and compromise of one's faith. Some are suspicious of it as involving secret methods of proselytism and 'sheep-stealing'. At any rate, prejudices and apprehensions are so prevalent that the goal of ecumenism is vaguely grasped and the real ecumenical problems seldom discovered and discussed. In this context, therefore, a correct understanding of the nature and goal of the ecumenical movement is imperative and the need of a basic agreement called for, for further discussion on the role of the Malankara Catholic Church, for that matter of any Oriental Catholic Church, in the ecumenical movement of the Church.

#### The nature and goal of ecumenism

That christianity remains divided today is a painful fact, and even a most scandalous one, contradictory and detrimental to the very message of it. Efforts for reconciliation have unfortunately turned out to be causes for further division and estrangement. Closer study of the situation reveals that, apart from the doctrinal differences, prejudices and misunderstandings play a great role to keep the communities away from one another preventing them from closer contact and mutual acceptance. Finding themselves in this state of alienation and division, the Churches are getting more and more aware of the need for coming together, to understand each other, to share with each other the riches they possess as Christian communi-

2. Cf. The speech of Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of the 'Ad limina' visit of the Oriental Bishops of India, Dec. 16, 1985.



ties. This quest for universality is urging them to grow in the mystery of Christ, healing and restoring their traditions that might have been mutilated and damaged in the course of history, by way of sharing and dialogue. It is this common search for integrity and wholeness, that gave birth to the modern ecumenical movement. It is the mutual encounter between ecclesial traditions that have suffered distortion, the drawing together of separated brethren, the healing of communities that have been injured, the integration of all Christians in the 'Una Sancta'<sup>3</sup>. Ecumenism, therefore, is a movement to restore unity among Churches and achieve universality of their heritage through dialogue mutual enrichment, acceptance of each other in each one's unique ecclesial reality and individuality. Ecumenism primarily envisages ecclesial communities and spiritual traditions and not individuals and immediate situations. Promotion of Christian Unity takes place on both levels, but the two aspects are clearly distinct, though not opposed. Vat. II Council places both of them in the same movement worked out and guided by the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

### A basic agreement

All of us know what the ecumenical movement has in recent years brought about within the Church of Christ. It has helped us to come closer, dispel prejudices, understanding each other deeper and better. It has provided us with opportunities to worship and pray together experiencing at least in a small degree the underlying unity that keeps us together. We have learned to help each other out of love for Christ, discovering our common social responsibility. With ever more

enthusiasm and seriousness we have engaged in common and ecumenical studies to equip ourselves to find solutions of problems confronting the Church. Above all, amidst our growing experience of unity, we have learnt to identify our real disagreements and differences which keep us in a constant awareness that we have yet to go a long way, towards the unity we are all praying and craving for with great hope.

While we are willing to acknowledge the good results that have been brought about by the ecumenical movements, we have to admit that our ecumenical involvements are still limited and they are yet to be directed to the goal they ought to aim at or reach in due course.

It is common knowledge that even the most prominent organisations of the ecumenical movement are labouring under the pressure of inconsistencies and contradictions. Professor Zander speaks for the Orthodox Church; "The ecumenical problem thus paradoxically combines mutually exclusive principles and there seems to be no way out of it." Professor Edmund Schlirk of the Evangelical Church in Germany has no hesitation to describe the W. C. C. as the most paradoxical organisation. While the W. C. C., he points out, is the fellowship of Churches which recognises our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour and sets unity of all Christians and communion among the Churches as its goal, it has neither the power nor the machinery to make the member-Churches effectively attain it; while it suggests brotherly assistance to each other, it shrinks under its inability to call upon the member-Churches to lift the anathemas they have imposed upon each other."<sup>5</sup>

3. Cf. Bernard Lambert, *Ecumenism*, Herder, 1962, p. 32

4. U. R. No 4

5. Cf. Edmund Schlirk, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, London, 1967, p. 5



In other words, W. C. C. or any other organisation is justified in existing or living with these contradictions only if it tends to make progress towards the unity of its member Churches in which they can enjoy full communion in the Lord whose Will it is that they should meet Him as one Church and not divided.

The success and effectiveness of these organisations shall, therefore, be evaluated in terms of the goal of unity they purport to facilitate and promote. We do well if we keep on reminding ourselves that the goal of ecumenism is complete, full, unity of the People of God, bringing the Mystical Body of Christ to its perfect fulfilment by means of dialogue, co-operation, integration and by drawing Christians and their ecclesial communities together reconciling them and healing their damaged traditions.

#### **Unity : God's Grace and our task**

Assessing the inner reality of the Church and placing it existentially in the wider context of the redemptive plan of God, we find that the unity of the Church is not based on the work of its members. It is not the product of the members it joins together; rather the members are product of it, and it makes them one in itself and they cannot live as such unless they are all united to Him. Thus the Church exists more truly in Christ than it exists in the multiplicity of His members. The members of the Church are one because they have been chosen and called to be a people of one God; because they are all baptized and incorporated into the same Spirit; the underlying invisible principle of the unity of the Church is the Holy Spirit who is sent to His people by the Father through His only begotten Son. That is to say, the Church unity is springing forth from the inner life of the most Holy Trinity and it is based on the inten-

tionality of the single saving act of God. This ultimate unity and nothing less is what Christ desired for His Followers: "That they may be one, as we also are one" (Jn. 17:21).

This is, therefore, a sacred, supernatural unity, a fellowship given as a grace to be cherished and enjoyed by the People of God. That the source and principle of Christian unity is the unifying and vivifying Spirit given by the Father in His Son, does not leave those who are called upon to be His Church, free from their obligation to respond to the call of God. For, the unity God has given His Church is to be expressed in terms of a response realised through the cause of salvation history. Since we are created one, we ought to be one; since we are redeemed as a people of God by the Father in His son through the Spirit, we have to remain and appear as such. In other words, ours is not the task of creating the unity of the Church in Christ, but the Church must give expression to it in its actual life and mission. This is the great task confronting the Church on earth.

#### **Aiming at a visible Unity**

Fixing our starting point in our task of giving expression to our unity as the people of God constituted in Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit, we cannot forget to direct our ecumenical activities towards attaining a visible unity of the Church. For if we stop at the unity of the Church as verified and realised in our incorporation into Christ only, without laying sufficient stress on the need of expressing it in the concrete reality and life situations of the Church in the form of a visible unity, there is always the danger of ecclesiastical docetism and spiritualism.

The unity of the people of God is effected in accordance with the dispositions of God's salvific will and it is along the same lines of the



redemptive plan and work that it is expressed, enriched and completed. Hence it follows the law of incarnation. The Church is the continuation of the mystery of Christ, dynamically present in the world, through the members united to Him, in His Spirit. The manifestation of the power of the Spirit has to take visible forms. The Spirit being one impels us to be one not only invisibly and anonymously but also visibly and in recognisable forms. Hence the people of God as the Body of Christ is constituted as a visible fellowship in the Word, Sacraments and Orders. In fact this Body of Christ is formed in its basic expression by the participation in the Body of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which has to be further manifested in the concrete forms of Christian life in the day-to-day life situation. A fellowship that is not recognisably both divine and human is no ecclesial fellowship at all. It follows that although the divine element is primary and creative in the Church the human element may not be left to chance.

Hence all Christian Churches tend to defend a visible unity as essential for the Church if it has to have any meaning as an effective sign and symbol of unity for the world.

The W. C. C. in its third general assembly held at New Delhi in 1961, explained this theme in its statement on unity: "we believe that the unity which is both God's Will and His gift to His Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptised into Jesus Christ and confess Him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed

fellowship, holding the one Apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls His people. It is for such unity that we believe we must pray and work."<sup>6</sup>

Taking a step further, in the fifth general assembly at Nairobi in 1975, the W. C. C. declared: "We believe that we are called to the goal of visible unity and have, therefore, struggled as previous assemblies have done, to describe more fully that goal....."<sup>7</sup>

A definite expression of the quest for visible unity can be seen in the 'Ten proposition for visible unity' advanced by the Churches' unity commission in England. The first two of the propositions run as follows: "1. We reaffirm our belief that the visible unity in life and mission of all Christ's people is the Will of God. 2. We, therefore, declare our willingness to join in a covenant actively to seek that visible unity."<sup>8</sup>

Already in the first preparatory meeting of this commission the Bishop of St. Edmundsbury pointed out why they insisted on the goal of visible unity: "We seek visible unity because only a united body of people realising their interdependence on each other and their dependence on Christ can so act ....."<sup>9</sup>.

6. Cf. The New Delhi Report, London, 1962, p. 116

7. Cf. Nairobi Assembly of the W. C. C. (Ed. D. S. Amalorpavadas), Bangalore, 1976, p. 72

8. Cf. 'Churches' Unity Commission': The propositions, in 'One in Christ', Vol X II 1976, p. 209

9. Cf. *ibid*, p. 199.



It is, therefore, clear that all Churches, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, do really affirm and seek organic and visible Church-unity as the goal of all our ecumenical endeavours and encounters.

### Two trends of conceiving this Church-unity

It may be asked if this unity be conceived as a unity achieved along the lines of a fulfilment and completion of the existing visible reality and unity of the Church (the classical view-point of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, each identifying, of course, the existing visible unity as that of its own Church) or as a creation of an external unity for the invisible Church that exists above all the present Christian Communions (the general protestant view). This very difference of opinion itself is an ecumenical problem and, in fact, the most fundamental of all, which we cannot afford to be unaware of in our discussions.

### The ecumenical movement promoted by the Malankara Catholic Church

Ecumenism being understood thus as a movement to promote Church Unity, we are in a position to assess the role of the Malankara Catholic Church in this regard. Starting from the very reunion event in 1930, the Malankara Catholic Church has responded to the divine call to Unity and has vigorously continued this process of promoting Christian unity both on the individual level and on the ecumenical level and according to the correct Catholic principles. Here we deal only with its ecumenical aspect. If we study closely the great Reunion event that took place in the Malankara Church in 1930 and the efforts for unity that preceded it and all that it has contributed to the ecclesial life and mission of the Church in general

and Malankara Church in particular, one cannot fail to understand that the Reunion event in 1930 and the Movement it has given birth were significant contributions to the ecumenical movement in our day.

### The encounter and the mutual acceptance

Anyone who seriously studies the Reunion in 1930 in the Malankara Church will discover that the event was the crowning point of a continuous and active dialogue between the Malankara Church and the Apostolic See of Rome. Ever since the separation of the Malankara Church from the Catholic Communion, the former was making strenuous efforts to reestablish that communion and accept the primacy of the Roman Pontiff safeguarding its individuality. During the course of this dialogue and discussions, the Holy See of Rome was gradually led to approve and accept the ecclesial identity of the Malankara Church having acknowledged its spiritual traditions and religious heritage. But only after three centuries of strenuous efforts for dialogue, all of which met with various degrees of failure, could this mutual acceptance be effected at least in principle<sup>10</sup>.

Sometimes the Reunion Event is badly understood or inadequately described as a return of repentant individuals to their paternal home. The Non-Catholics, especially those of the Malankara Church look down upon it as a betrayal and desertion of their mother Church perpetuated in favour of the Roman Church. But the Reunion Movement led by the late Mar Ivanios of Happy Memory, was neither a mere refuge to the paternal household nor a desertion of the maternal home surrendering it to any alien domination. That it was an ecclesial event and an ecclesial act, is

10. Cf. Cyril Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Alwaye, 1973 pp. 102-117,



clear from the history of the Reunion Movement.

In fact, the revolt in 1653, against the Portuguese Missionaries was an attempt to protect the ecclesial status, the rights, privileges and the autonomy of the apostolic Church in Malabar. In all the negotiations for a reconciliation after the rift, it was again these demands and claims for autonomy that came up for discussion which, unfortunately could not be settled amicably in the beginning<sup>11</sup>. The leaders of the Malankara Church insistently continued to claim for their autonomy and submitted that the Holy See of Rome should acknowledge the ecclesial status of the Malankara Church as one having inviolable rights based on their apostolic origin and traditions<sup>12</sup>. In the successful reunion in 1930, while the reuniting prelates of the Malankara Church accepted the primacy of the Pope, Bishop of Rome, he being the successor of St Peter in the Holy See of Rome, the Holy See readily acknowledged the ecclesial status of the Malankara Church and accepted its legitimate traditions and spiritual legacy as authentically christian and apostolic<sup>13</sup>.

This was therefore, an historic encounter between two apostolic Churches in which both were reconciled, healed and perfected in terms of fullness of communion and Catholicity. The ecclesial unity achieved by the Malankara Catholic Church through the Reunion event and Movement remains, perhaps, the only event of this century, in which ecumenism, or an ecumenical movement, has reached the goal it purports to achieve.

Accepting that the success of this

ecumenical movement is partial as several ecclesial communities of the Malankara Church are still reluctant to commit themselves to this mutual encounter and acceptance, we regret to note that the significance of this is still disregarded and it is not appreciated as a glorious stage of the achievement of the goal of ecumenism understood as the promotion of Church unity in Malankara. In fact, this sad situation itself is one of the ecumenical problems that confronts us.

#### Dialogue and sharing continues

By the emergence of the Malankara Catholic Church and its existence in the big Catholic Communion, the possibility of setting an ecclesial ground for real sharing and dialogue between the Catholic and Non-Catholic Churches was looming large. The Malankara Catholic Church provides a common forum for the Catholic Faith and the Malankara Traditions to meet. Rooted in the spiritual traditions of the ancient Malankara Church and at the same time enjoying the Catholic Communion, the Malankara Catholic Church paves the way for a deeper understanding between the Catholic and Non-Catholic communities. Through the reunited families, who are still closely related and acquainted with their non-catholic brethren, the latter gain ample possibilities to learn more about the Catholic Church giving them good opportunities to remove prejudices and expel misunderstandings. Similarly through the Malankara Catholic Church, the other Churches in the Catholic Communion, get a deeper knowledge and closer contact with the life and spiritual heritage of the

11. Cf. Guiseppe S. Maria, *Prima spedizione alla India Orientali*, Romae, 1666, pp 125-126.

12. Cf. Cyril Malancharuvil *op. cit.* pp. 102-117

13. Cf. *ibid* pp. 122-131



Apostolic Malankara Church. Thus placed within the Universal Church, the Malankara Catholic Church has to witness to the truth of diversity in unity among the Catholics, and being related to the Non-Catholic Malankara communities it has to be before them a persuasive testimonial and witness to the need of unity in diversity<sup>14</sup>. This role is most significant to the promotion of dialogue, mutual understanding and acceptance among the Churches envisaged in the ecumenical movement and its activities.

#### **A process of healing and restoration of an ancient Church**

If ecumenism is understood as a quest for universality and wholeness, as well as a process of healing and restoration, the Churches that have been alienated from other Churches and got impoverished by their division, shall have to be reconciled and healed by their entry in to communion with each other.

The Church in Malankara because of its origin from the Apostle St. Thomas has been claiming the rights and privileges of an apostolic Church. In fact, the revolt in 1653, as we have already noted, was the result of a defence of this autonomy against the interference of the missionaries. But unfortunately this ended up in the loss of the communion with the Holy see of Rome and consequently the Catholic Communion. Thus the Malankara Church, in its state of being cut off from the full Catholic Communion, could not claim to be fully authentic in terms of its individuality as an apostolic Church and of its Catholicity as the Church of Christ. Hence its entry into the full communion with the Universal Church through its communion with

the Holy See of Rome was necessary to regain its role and position as an authentic, individual and apostolic Church in the one Church of Christ. This was regained, at least in partial fulfilment, when the Malankara community has accepted communion with the Catholic Church through the See of Rome, retaining its legitimate traditions and spiritual heritage and emerged as the Malankara Catholic Church. The existence of the Malankara Catholic Church in the Catholic Communion and the acceptance of it in that communion is the symbolic reality of the restoration of the ancient Malankara Church to its authentic ecclesial dignity and status of an apostolic local Church. This then is also a strong affirmation of the Vat. II Council's ecclesiology, which in fact was loudly proclaimed in anticipation in the reunion event in 1930, that each individual Church has its own right of being individual and autonomous as long as it remains in the Catholic Communion through its communion with the Roman Pontiff.

This, in turn, is a strong plea and a sure indication as to which direction the ecumenical movement should advance among the ecclesial communities of the Malankara Apostolic Church.

#### **The Task ahead.**

As it has been said earlier, the Malankara Catholic Church considers the promotion of Church unity as its special vocation and does involve itself in fulfilling this obligation. Evidently the teachings and directions given by the Council Vat. II in its Decree on Ecumenism remain the basic guidelines for this task.<sup>15</sup> A commentary on them is not attempted here. However, a particular point

11. Cf. C. A. Abraham, *Fifty years in the Bond of Catholic Unity*. Trivandrum, 1980, p. 7

15. Cf. U R ms. III-VI



that may be more relevant in this regard may be mentioned.

**The hermeneutic principle of the unity of the Church:**

The Churches though agreed upon the need of unity, have not come to an agreement on what this unity should be and how it should be attained. This agreement, however, cannot be expected unless there should be an agreement on the concept of the Church itself. The meaning of the phrase 'One Church' depends mainly upon our conception of the church. For the meaning of the word 'One' depends upon the meaning of that which is one, and the quality of oneness varies according to the reality that must be one. Hence the kind of unity we envisage of the Church is predetermined by the kind of concept of the Church we have. That is to say, the hermeneutic principle of the unity of the Church to be achieved or expressed is the concept of the Church we explicitly or implicitly have. The hermeneutic principle of the concept of the Church, however, is determined by the particular outlook of the Church or the denomination we happen to belong to. A step further, on the philosophical plane, the concrete man of history as he lives his life is the hermeneutic principle of all human understanding. Thus our disagreement in the interpretation of the concept and unity of the Church may partly be remedied by our awareness of the manifold levels of this hermeneutical problem.

Each Church and denomination as well as the members belonging to that Church or denomination consciously or unconsciously entertain concept of the Church that in various degree differ from one another. Here is the hermeneutic problem of the ecumenical movement. This problem is acute not merely in a theoretical understanding of the Church. As the

current notion of the interdependence of theory and practice well shows, the hermeneutic problem in ecumenical movement is both theoretical and practical. As a result of this interdependence the problem of understanding, especially in the case of the quest for Church unity is multidimensional.

**Common Understanding of the Church needed.**

The solution to this impasse cannot be merely theoretical, nor can it be merely practical. Hence it should be sought along the lines of a gradual and painful reprisal and renewal of Christian life by all Churches and ecclesial groups. Only a converted man can work for unity. This is also true of the Churches. A renewed Church of the kind will have a concept of the Church that is more representative of the reality of the Church of Christ.

Along with this, a common understanding of the concept of the Church has to be sought after, not only in ecumenical study groups but also in the concrete life situation of the Churches. Only through the interaction between these two process of arriving at a common understanding of the church and living in it constantly renewed and reformed, the concrete forms of Church unity will be shaped and rendered relevant. Since both theory and practice are necessary to reveal our goal, the local Church, where the day to day life of the faithful is lived, is not merely a field of experiment for our theories. Our theories become genuine and effective only in the practice of day to day life of the vision enshrined in the theories. As a consequence of such practice the theory itself is tested, enlivened, proved and enriched, whereby a new vision and a new theory come to hand. Now progress is possible. Our goal becomes clearer and tied to



practice and living. Thus a new understanding of the church and of its unity as something to be achieved becomes clearer and credible.

This is a responsible task to be undertaken by the faithful under the guidance and direction of the Hierarchy as pointed out by the Council Vat II<sup>16</sup>. This is the 'Responsible risk' cautiously recommended by the W. C. C. that has to be taken by the individual churches with the necessity of 'Exerting Pressure on the limits of their own inherited traditions'<sup>17</sup>.

#### Particular traditions open to each other

Every Christian has received the Gospel message through the tradition of a particular Church and is incorporated by Baptism into the one Church within that particular tradition. These traditions, therefore, have their force and underlying influences as sources of confessional formulae and doctrinal tenets. Accepting, however, the fact of a divided Christendom the understanding of our traditions can be broadened. A broadened understanding of our traditions naturally exerts pressure on the life situations we live in the church. As soon as these traditions are brought to life by making them relevant in actual conflict situations of Christian life, we lose much of their power as reactionary forces in striving after unity. These traditions, therefore, can serve the cause of unity only to the extent of their ability to be open to each other and get enriched in terms of fulfilment and perfection. Hence in a true and genuine involvement in our quest for a visible unity of the Church of Christ we have to exert pressure on our own inherited traditions in exchange of the greater values and gifts received in our pursuit after unity.

#### Dispositions required.

It is obvious that the taking of such steps can hardly leave our concepts and beliefs and existing church structure untouched, a salutary change and evolution that should be well received and accelerated.

It is against this background that both the Vat. II Council and the W. C. C. called for a 'change of heart' as the basic condition for ecumenical dialogue worthy of its name insisting on the need of being open to the Spirit who leads us into this unity and who makes us capable of expressing it, in concrete forms of a true ecclesial life.

This alone will help us to examine and evaluate our unconscious and conscious presuppositions, be they dogmatic, philosophical or anthropological.

The W. C. C. has already foreseen the cost of this involvement in the pursuit of unity. "The achievement of unity will involve nothing less than a death and rebirth of many forms of church life as we have known them. We believe that nothing less costly can finally suffice"<sup>18</sup>.

#### Church Unity seen as the unity of redemption.

The unity of Christianity is the unity of a redemption which though worked out and inaugurated in Jesus Christ, has to be fully achieved by the people of God step by step through the death-resurrection pattern of life, Christ himself has willingly accepted from His Father.

Understanding Church unity in relation with the saving act of God manifest in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ has deep ecumenical

16. Cf. U R n I n. VII. n 10-12

17. Cf. New Delhi Report, p. 12.

18. Cf. *ibid* p. 117



significance. For this will enable us to interpret the picture of unity visualised for the Church more in keeping with a concept of the Church, that would be more acceptable to many of the Christian Churches and communities. There is a growing tendency to understand the Church as the dynamic presence of the Risen Lord in relationship with man or as the expression of Christ's continued unifying saving activity<sup>19</sup>. This conception of the Church, while safeguarding the continuity of the single saving intentionality of Christ brings into relief the reality of the saving act here and now, and consequently with the changes needed in the visible elements that constitute the Church's expressiveness. This gives room for arriving at a better, more relevant visible unity of the Church prayerfully hoped for by all. Consistent with the features of the saving act of God, the one Church then becomes all-embracing, (being the expression of the saving intentionality of Christ), necessarily unfulfilled (being situated in between the resurrection and parousia), demanding (being composed of the people of God entrusted with the duty of building up of the body of Christ to its mature measure) and destined for inevitable fulfilment (being assured by Christ<sup>20</sup>).

This sort of Church-unity does not imply simple uniformity of organisation, rite or expression, as the W. C. C. feared<sup>21</sup>, but there will be enough theological space for legitimate pluralism contributing to the fullest expression of the life of the Spirit.

An understanding of the Church and of its unity along these lines will cut a middle way between the two

positions one holding on to a once-for-all well-established one Church and the other gropingly waiting for the emergence of an ideal super Church.

### Conclusion

If the ecumenical movement has its goal the promotion of the unity of Churches by healing their mutilated traditions and enriching their impoverished spiritual patrimony through dialogue, encounter, reconciliation and mutual acceptance, with the emergence of the Malankara Catholic church a new chapter in the history of the ecumenical movement has been written down. For through the Reunion event in 1930, a wing of the old Christian community in Malankara has regained the Communion of the Catholic Church safeguarding its ecclesial identity. If it was the restoration of apostolic heritage and dignity of an apostolic Church on the part of the Malankara Church, it was a new encounter and dialogue with an apostolic Church on the part of the other individual Churches in communion with the Holy see of Rome. That the unity of the Catholic Church is expressed in the communion of individual Churches united with the Roman Pontiff and with the holy see of Rome is strongly and clearly brought into relief in the event of the reunion and continues to be affirmed by the Malankara Catholic Church. The existence of three rites in India promoting different ways of liturgical worship, theological thinking and pastoral practices, is a loud proclamation of this ecclesial vision. While the Malankara Catholic Church strongly defended that the ecclesial identity of every individual Church, based on its own individuality in terms of its liturgy,

19. Cf. Peter Chirico, ss.: "One Church: What does it mean?" in *Theological Studies*, 1967, pp. 659-682.

20. Cf. *ibid*, pp. 681-682.

21. Cf. New Delhi Report, p. 117.

discipline, spiritual patrimony and cultural heritage, is to be safeguarded as an ecclesial treasure, it has clearly proved that the authenticity of these individual Churches is rooted in their communion with the supreme pastor in the Holy See of Rome, he being the successor of Peter, the Head of the Apostles and Vicar of Christ in His Church. Within the Catholic communion the Malankara Catholic Church has to witness to the truth of the Catholicity of the Church of Christ and in its relationship with the non-Catholic Malankara communities it has to affirm the need of communion among the Churches. In other words, making it possible for the Churches, especially the different ecclesial communities of the Malankara Church, agree on the concept and reality of the Church, not only in theory but also in practice, is the great ecumenical task of the Malankara Catholic Church. The overcoming of the theoretical and practical difficulties involved in this task is itself the ecumenical problem that confronts us. And yet we should remember that the solution of this problem and the achievement of the unity of the Churches will only effectively proclaim the truth that God has redeemed His people in Jesus Christ uniting them in His Holy Spirit. Looking forward

to our ecumenical role, we should be aware that the search for a visible organic unity of the Church of Christ that remains divided in the world by the sinfulness of man, can be made fruitful and effective only by genuine ecumenical dialogue among the Churches fully open to the guidance of the Spirit, the source of our unity. As we visualise the unity of the Church in accordance with our concept of the Church, our discussions on Church unity will bear no fruit if we don't and cannot agree on a common concept of the Church. The common understanding of the Church is not the result of a mere theoretical reasoning nor of mere compromising practices. It should be formed both in ecumenical studies and in authentic ecclesial life to have any ecumenical significance. The authenticity of the emerging new concept of the Church and of its unity will be based on the reality of the Christian life, constantly renewed and reformed in the ecclesial community. The pattern followed in this process must be the 'Death-Resurrection' pattern of the redemptive work of Christ. The achievement of unity then becomes the appropriation of the grace of salvation and the gift of redemption we have been granted by God in Christ through His Spirit.

Metropolitan Cyril Mar Baselios



# Holy Father's Letter to the Bishops of India-A Response

## 1. Introduction

The letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II issued from the Vatican on 28 May 1987 "to my venerable Brothers the Bishops of India", is indeed an epoch-making event in the history of Christianity in India. As desired by the Holy Father let us hope and pray "that it will be given the full support of all the Bishops of the country", and all our "priests, religious and faithful... accept and co-operate fully in its implementation."

The Syro-Malabar Church has special reason for thanking the Lord and for rejoicing, for this historic intervention of the Holy Father has opened up new avenues for its growth. An attempt is made in this article to respond to the letter point by point, to bring out certain nuances, and comment on certain points the Holy Father has specifically stated, and certain others he has left out without a mention.

In the introductory paragraph of the letter the Holy Father mentions the study that has been going on "with regard to the inter-ritual questions which have arisen in India in recent years". Inter-ritual questions have arisen in India not in recent times but ever since the Latin missionaries came to India, and specifically from 1599 when the so called Synod of Diamper inaugurated a systematic process of latinising and sub-

jugating the Church of the St. Thomas Christians. This letter has a wider and more historic significance than it purports to have: it corrects many an aberration in inter-Church relations and Catholic communion that has existed in India from the introduction of Western Christianity in India until today.

The Holy Father goes on to refer to the promise he made to the bishops of India during his pastoral visit to India in February 1986, that he "would do everything possible to ensure a just and fair settlement of the issues, one that would take into account all the pastoral exigencies of unity and truth". It should be frankly admitted that few people in India then thought this issue would be resolved in so short a time. Experts in Oriental Church affairs seriously doubted whether the present Pope would ever give a just solution to this question. It should be stated to the credit of the Holy Father that he has kept his promise, and that too so felicitously. By this he has won the everlasting gratitude of Orientals not only in India, but all over the world, because this letter would be a trend-setter in inter-church relations all over the world.

## 2. The Pontifical Commission

The letter gives the impression that the appointment of the pontifical commission followed immediately after the promise the Pope made to the bishops of India in February 1986.

But in between there was the special synod of Bishops in Rome convened by the Holy Father to evaluate the implementation of the decisions of the Second Vatican Council. At the Bishop's Synod the three Oriental Archbishops of India in a series of very effective interventions made it home to the synod fathers that the decisions of the council with regard to inter-ritual relations had not been implemented in India even after twenty five years. Their speeches received wide coverage and favourable comments from the Italian press. The representatives of the bishops' conferences all over the world evinced great concern over the plight of the Orientals in India. It was under such circumstances that the Holy Father announced to the Synod fathers his decision to appoint the pontifical commission.

Considering the composition of the pontifical commission, (Cardinal Secretary of State being its president and the Cardinal prefects of two Roman congregations being among its members), we learn that such a high-ranking pontifical commission has not been appointed over nearly 300 years. After the Holy Father announced the composition of the pontifical commission, something rather improper happened; when a C. B. C. I. meeting was in session, the Latin bishops of India had a meeting of their own and resolved unanimously to request the Holy Father that Archbishop Henry D'Souza also must be appointed member of the Pontifical Commission. This was done. When the Holy Father described the composition of the pontifical commission Archbishop Henry D'Souza was not mentioned by name but included in "and others". Whatever we might think about the propriety of such procedure, we should rejoice because the Latin bishops have now no grounds to complain that their chief spokesman was not heard by the pontifical commission.

The letter gives a very long description of the composition, procedure, and working of the pontifical commission but does not say anything about its conclusions, proposals or recommendations, or how these are related, to the pastoral instructions given by the Holy Father in the letter. The Holy Father states that the commission considered the pastoral, historical, theological and canonical aspects of the issue and the "wealth of conciliar teaching was given an eminent place". We may safely presume that the findings of the 'study' (this word is used three times with reference to the work of the commission) by the commission were in general accepted by the Holy Father and incorporated in the letter.

### 3. Apostolic Visitor

We have seen how the letter makes no mention of the special bishops' synod; but it makes a more serious omission: there is no mention of appointment of Archbishop Antony Padiyara as Apostolic Visitor of the Syro-Malabar Catholics residing outside their territory or the report submitted by him. The appointment was by Pope John Paul I and the report was submitted to the present Pope. This is too important a matter to be omitted without serious reasons.

This omission is all the more surprising, because, from what we know of the Apostolic Visitor's report and his recommendations, this falls in line with "the study" made by the Pontifical commission and the pastoral instructions given by the Holy Father in the letter. What would have prompted the Holy Father to totally neglect the report of the Apostolic Visitor, in which he would have found new grounds for his pastoral instructions?

We can arrive at only one reason: the Holy Father wanted his



pastoral instructions to be acceptable especially to the Latin bishops of India who, he knew, had serious reservations about the findings and recommendations of the Apostolic Visitor. Nothing would be lost, and much could be gained, by playing down those things repugnant to the Latin bishops of India. We can only appreciate the pastoral sensitivity of the Holy Father.

#### 4. St. Thomas Christians

Section 2 of the letter is a historical note on the origin and evolution of Christianity in India. The first paragraph is about "a considerable community of Christians, known as St. Thomas Christians". This is a very guarded statement: this community has existed "since very ancient times", not from apostolic times; "in southern India", not all over India. This is also true of their connection with St. Thomas the Apostle: it is "a very strong tradition" that he "visited and laboured in India, both in the extreme south and what is known today as the Madras-Mylapore area". The reference to the tomb is all the more cautious: "There is even a tomb in Mylapore which is venerated as his resting place".

The Holy Father does recognize the St. Thomas tradition of the Orientals of India, but not to the extent to which they ascribe it, or even to the extent to which earlier popes, like Pius XII had gone. By limiting them to "Southern India", their claims over the whole of India (Kolla hendo), is not recognised. What the Pope does state here should be welcome to the Orientals in India, though they may have a complaint that he has not fully understood their Christian origins.

It is gratifying to note that the Holy Father mentions the arrival of

"groups of Christians from the Middle East, later on, at various times", so that there was "the Church in India" before their arrival, which was "strengthened" by them, and they "became assimilated into the Church already there."

#### 5. Latin Missionaries

The second paragraph of section 2 of the letter is about the arrival of the Latin missionaries from "the thirteenth century" and about the "missionary activity" "process of evangelization" till "recent years". It may be a little surprising to note that the Holy Father does not mention Western Christianity in India as an addition to the Eastern Church that already existed: there was "the Church in India", "the Church already there", before the arrival of the Latin missionaries.

The result of the "coming of the Latin missionaries" was that "the missionary activity of the Church began to extend". The letter does not state that the St. Thomas Christians did not have any missionary activity before the arrival of the Latin missionaries; but it does state that it was expanded only after their arrival. The letter gives a graphic picture of the expansion of the missionary activity: from Calicut to Cochin, from Cochin to Goa, then throughout the present day India, and finally to areas which today are themselves independent neighbouring countries.

#### 6. Generous collaboration

The last part of the second section of the letter is a glowing tribute to the generous collaboration of the Syro-Malabarians in this process of evangelisation. This had two phases. The first phase, which "has always existed", was on an individual basis, "on the part of priests, religious and laity baptized in the Syro Malabar Rite".

The letter does not state that this "generous collaboration" meant that these priests, religious and laity had to renounce their ritual identity, put on Latin ritual identity, and work in Latin dioceses. Of course there was "generous collaboration", but this was necessitated by unjust inter-ritual relations, and the division of the whole of India and Latin Dioceses and the limiting of the Syro-Malabar Church into 0.4% of the territory of India. The Holy Father does not mention such uncomfortable historical facts.

The second phase of the "generous collaboration" in the process of evangelization has been on the part of the "Syro-Malabar Church itself in certain areas of the north". Here "generous collaboration" has been on the side of Latin bishops too because it was bishops like Archbishop Eugene D'Souza who took the initiative in carving out of Latin Diocese territories for the Syro-Malabar Church for evangelization.

The Holy Father says that "This collaboration should not be forgotten", and praises all for upholding the age-old adage: "salus animarum suprema lex". He makes no mention of the unjust inter-church relations existing in India for centuries, but courageously goes on to change the situation radically.

## 7. The Second Vatican Council

The Holy Father has already stated in section 1 that in the study of the pontifical commission, "the wealth of the conciliar teaching was given an eminent place". In section 3 of the letter the Holy Father quotes the relevant articles from the Decree "Christus Dominus" on the pastoral Office of the Bishops in the Church and the Decree "Orientalium Ecclesiarum" on the Catholic Eastern Churches, and states that the provisions contained in these Decrees apply to India.

It is to be noted that in this letter the Holy Father does not develop any new principles or norms with regard to inter-ritual relations: he merely states that the principles and norms established twenty five years ago by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council should be applied in India. It is everybody's knowledge that these norms have not been implemented in India by the resistance of the Latin bishops who held the view that these norms did not apply to India. The Holy Father is here demolishing the position held hitherto by the Latin bishops.

As usual the Holy Father does not condemn the Latin bishops who have been misusing their pastoral office. It is to be noted that in the Bombay-Pune area where the Holy Father considers the presently existing situation as mature for the establishment now of an Eparchy of the Syro-Malabar Rite, not even a parish has been established for Syro-Malabarians by the Latin bishops concerned. In this regard no individual bishop is to be blamed, because they have been following a common understanding and policy.

We cannot fail to note that the Holy Father is speaking here in terms of "desire" on the part of Orientals in general, and that of the Syro-Malabarians in particular, and not in terms of their "right" as an individual Church in the Catholic communion. He does not speak in the language of the Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church which among "the obligations and rights of all Christ's faithful" includes the following in canon 214: Christ's faithful have the right to worship God according to the provisions of their own rite approved by the lawful pastors of the Church; they also have right to follow their own form of spiritual life, provided it is in accord with Church teaching". The Syro-Malabarians residing within Latin



Dioceses have been systematically denied this basic right. Hence it is not merely a matter fulfilling of a "desire", but redressing an injustice. The Holy Father, however, uses the pastoral style of reconciliation and this can only be respected.

### 8. Variety in Unity

Section 4 of the letter is devoted by the Holy Father in demolishing another strategic position hitherto held by the Latin bishops in India in clear violation of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in the Decree on the Catholic Churches in article 2, that multiplicity of rites in a country like in India would only destroy the unity of the Church. The argument in defence of variety of rites in the unity of catholic communion is given in language that would not offend the Latin bishops.

### 9. Episcopal Bodies

In section 5 of the letter the Holy Father lays down three norms and makes an announcement. Hitherto the national bishops' conference of India which is a statutory body in accordance with the canon law for the Latin Church, has been virtually functioning as an episcopal body for the entire Catholic Church in India. According to Canon 450 only Latin bishops would be properly members of the Episcopal conference, the Oriental bishops may be invited and may have only consultative vote.

The Latin bishops of India pleaded for a change in this provision before the canon law was enacted, and once it was enacted, it petitioned exemption for India. Neither was granted by the Holy Father. Now the three individual churches will have their own episcopal bodies to deal with ritual matters, and the National Conference of all the Catholic bishops will continue for questions of common

concern and of a national and supra-ritual character.

The Holy Father speaks of "episcopal bodies"; hence it is open for the Syro-Malabar Church, and also the Syro-Malankara Church, to have a permanent Synod with at least a Major Archbishop to preside over it. This, of course, would depend on the provisions of the much awaited code of canon law for the Oriental Churches.

### 10. Evangelisation

A very real grievance of the Orientals in India has been the denial of the right to evangelise without denying their Rite. The Holy Father seems to propose a re-distribution of areas for missionary activity among the three churches in India. This task is left to the Catholic bishops of India and the Holy Father lays down no norms except that it should "promote an evangelisation that will be truly effective and yet avoid all dangers of confusion and spirit of rivalry."

Let us hope and pray that the Latin bishops would give up the dog in the manger policy hitherto followed; similarly, the oriental bishops would have to be more open to the demands of inculturation and an incarnational approach to evangelisation. I wish the Holy Father had been more specific in this regard.

### 11. Orientals in Latin Dioceses

Finally the Holy Father re-iterates the conciliar decrees for the pastoral care of the Orientals living in Latin Rite dioceses. Here three things are made clear (1) The pastoral care of Orientals living in Latin dioceses rests with the Latin Ordinary; he has jurisdiction over them, until a proper hierarchy is established for them. It would not be proper, therefore, for Orientals or their bishops to defy this authority, as is alledged to be

done in places like Delhi. Orientals may have to correct themselves in this regard.

(2) Latin Bishops have pastoral care, jurisdiction, over Orientals residing in their dioceses not for Latinising them and eventually assimilating and integrating them into the respective parish/diocese but for preserving them in their proper ritual identity. In this respect the Latin bishops have to undergo a real conversion of heart and provide as soon as possible for an adequate pastoral care of Orientals, as required by the Holy Father.

"A priest of the Eastern Rite" would not mean merely a priest baptized in the Eastern Rite, but trained and ordained to work in a Latin Diocese. The proposed ministry for Orientals could be properly done only by priests trained and ordained for the respective Eastern Rite.

The Holy Father leaves the implementation of this instruction to the good will of the bishops. There is no reason to think that this hope is misplaced. In case some bishop fails to do so, who has to take up the cause? The faithful themselves. Also the president of the episcopal body of the respective Eastern Church. This aspect is left vague.

(3) The so called "single juris-

diction", "one territory, one bishop theory" is rejected by the Holy Father. In the same territory bishops of several rites can have jurisdiction. Hence the significance of the proposed establishment of Syro-Malabar Eparchy in Bombay-Pune Region. Once the principle is established, it can be used whenever necessary. The Holy Father lays down the procedure for this.

## 12. Conclusion

The concluding sixth section is a moving appeal by the Holy Father for unity and communion among the three individual churches in India. It borders on the mystical when the Pope asks his dear Brothers in the episcopate "to continue to reflect on the marvellous mystery of the Universal Church and all the Churches or Rites which make up her variety in unity."

This letter of Holy Father should begin a new era in the history of the Catholic Church in India, a new era of inner growth and collaboration, of evangelisation and ecumenism, at the service of the kingdom of God in our dear country. Neither Latins nor Orientals have reason to feel elated or let down. Let us walk faithfully in the path marked out by the supreme pastor of the Universal Church.

Fr. Sebastian Poonoly CMI.

Calicut.



## A Chart for De-latinisation

"Circular Letter Concerning Studies of the Oriental Churches" issued by William Card. Baum, Prefect, Congregation for Catholic Education, dated 6 January 1987 and published in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition) on 6 April 1987, is a clear document indicating the process of de-latinisation of the entire Catholic Church. It does not take long to read the Circular Letter but it takes considerably more time to understand its ecclesial impact. There are three areas in which the de-latinisation process is urgently indicated:

1) In the Circular Letter special mention is made with regard to the Eastern studies in theological training: "In seminaries and theological faculties, courses should be made available to the students on the fundamental notions regarding the Eastern Churches, their theological ideas, their liturgical and spiritual traditions ... The students should recognize and come to understand the liturgical and cultural diversity among the Eastern Catholic Churches" (n.10). Thus the students of the future Church should possess a better perspective in this regard. The Circular Letter makes the real problem of the latins explicit when it adds: "How much is known of the liturgical and spiritual life of the ancient Christian traditions?" (n.2). The ignorance is mainly because of the religious and clerical formation which follow the latin pattern. In fact in this regard

the Circular Letter reminds the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 17.

2) The Circular Letter realistically mentions that "a complete response... would require action by a number of Departments of the Holy See" (n. 8). It is clear that the Letter affirming the above-mentioned bold statement has in mind the not very enviable (past and present) situation prevalent in many departments, especially in the Congregation for Oriental Churches. This Congregation appears in practice a latin Congregation for the Oriental Churches. It is a well known historical fact that this congregation has often been run by individuals who are not particularly oriental. Moreover, it is a sad fact that no qualified member of the ancient Thomas Christians of India except Rev. Fr. Placid J. Podipara has ever been given an important role to play in the decision making process of this Congregation.

In order to remedy this situation, those who will be called to serve the Congregation for Oriental Churches (from top to bottom) should be given a prior training in Eastern theological heritage. *Nemo dat quod non habet!* Till now, many of the responsible persons were seen to be ignorant of the Eastern heritage.

There would be no better way of doing so than by ensuring, to the

conviction and satisfaction of Orientals especially of the Thomas Christians of India, than a vigorous follow up on actions begun by Cardinal Rubin till 1985. At present the general impression is that delay in enforcing the important decisions of the Holy See is made to please the latins and the latinised leaders of the Oriental Churches in India. While reviving the universal Church is a long-term job, re-activating the Congregation for the Oriental Churches is not. The hard lesson to learn is that it is better to train leaders in the Church. We hope that the Pope as a wise ruler will see that no anti-oriental priest be promoted to episcopacy (in the latin as well as Oriental Churches) or to the offices of the Roman Curia.

3) The Letter finally mentions the diocesan Offices and centres of pastoral guidance. Diocesan curia is the administrative centre of the whole diocese. Therefore those who are in charge of the administration should be qualified in the heritage of Eastern Churches. Their ignorance may adversely affect the pastoral life of the entire diocese.

#### Conclusion

The totality of the new policies may transform the mood from confrontation and tension to reconciliation and relaxed relationships in

the Catholic Church. The thrust of management in the latinised universal Church would now change from perpetual "*ad hocism*" which many latins preferred because it made everything so easy to manipulate, to long-term policy perspectives in some key areas. Now what as needed stands clearly: to undo the wrong-doings of the latin Church since many centuries. With this letter, expressing its keenness to re-instate studies of Oriental matters in all seminaries, universities and training centres, a solution might be found in the current confusion. Even if some of the guidelines will not be digested by the latins, it was to be expected. The Circular Letter is the first of its kind. The aim of the Letter is not at issue. The issue is neither how many latin seminaries will adopt it nor how many latins will read it. The important thing is that it happened at all. The Letter is going to lead to better relations between the different heritages, if not immediately then certainly in the future. It is a first step towards breaking the deadlock and it is a sure step towards a better understanding between the Eastern Churches and the latin Church. It will also undoubtedly pave the way for a long term policy in the area of priestly training and catholic education.

Thomas Vellilamthadam



# St James' Anaphora: An Ecumenical Locus

## A Survey of the Origin and Development of St. James' Anaphora

In India and abroad Syrian Christian communities, following the liturgical tradition of the Jerusalem - Antioch Liturgy of St. James, the brother of our Lord, superpose themselves in one and the same territory. They hold their allegiance and membership to different theological beliefs. And the variance in theological beliefs too is of variant degrees. Corresponding mutilation in the Syriac text of the Liturgy is only minimum. These Christians belong to the following Syrian Churches: the Malankara catholic, the Jacobite, the Orthodox, the Marthomite, the Thozhiyoor, and outside India are the Antiochene Catholic and Orthodox Churches. All these Churches belong to the one Syrian church. Thus many hundreds of thousands of christian believers worship God and celebrate their salvation in Christ in the universal church according to the Jerusalem-Antiochene Liturgy of St. James.

All of the above said Christians of different Churches of the Syrian tradition are proud of preserving and fostering the very precious and very antique anaphora of St. James. This anaphora is the foundation, prototype and mother of all the subsequent anaphoras, which number more than one hundred, of the Antiochene tradition, for their structure and tenor.

The Jerusalem-Antiochene origin of St. James' anaphora is the basis for the numerous elements in common with other Syriac anaphoras. From this point of view also St. James' anaphora is of great ecumenical importance.

### Relation with St. James

All the churches, which have inherited the syriac tradition, acknowledge that the anaphora under our discussion took its origin, at least in its basic structure, from St. James, the brother of our Lord. This age-old faith and mentality of the Syriac Church is eloquently expressed by Bar Salibi (+1173)

"On Wednesday, James, the brother of the Lord, celebrated the Qurobo (Liturgy) which has his name the beginning of which being "God and Lord of all". And being asked wherefrom he had taken it, he replied, "God is living, and I neither added nor left out anything of what I heard from the Lord. This is why this is the primitive and first liturgy."<sup>1</sup>

There are a good number of Syriac witnesses, who believe that the Liturgy of James the apostle and brother of the Lord proceeds from the very senacle where Jesus celebrated his Last supper with the disciples.<sup>2</sup> On

1. H. LABOURT, Dionysius Bar Salibi, *Expositio Liturgiae* (CSCO-14) Louvain, 1903, pp. 392-393.
2. Cfr. E. J. MOUNAYER, "The Eucharistic Liturgy of the Syrian Church of Antioch" in J. MADEY (ed), *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the Christian East*, Paderborn - Kottayam, 1982, pp. 73-74.

the first Wednesday after Pentecost the Malankara Church celebrates the anniversary of the First Eucharistic Celebration by St. James. This is an ancient practice of the Syriac Church. The Universal Church recognizes and teaches through the sixth and the seventh Ecumenical Councils (Constantinople III, 680-1 and Nicea II, 787) that James, the Brother of our Lord himself, is the author of the anaphora known in his name. Though the above-quoted words of Bar Salibi shall not be taken literally, the Greek and Syriac writers are almost unanimous to ascribe to the authorship of St. James' anaphora to James.<sup>3</sup>

Very ancient tradition witnesses that this James was an ardent lover of worship and prayer.<sup>4</sup> He was the first bishop of Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> Certain points seem to argue strongly for our case. The final word at Jerusalem council was of James (Acts 15). Paul, at his last trip to Jerusalem, was taken by the brethren to James, in whose presence all the elders too gathered (Gal, 1:19; Acts 21:16-18).<sup>6</sup> James' favouritism towards Jewish christians reflected in the New Testament epistle also could be brought into the same line. James' relation with Jerusalem as its first bishop confirms the possibility of the Jerusalem origin and foundation of the anaphora in his name from himself.

No written document of the original Jerusalem form of St. James' anaphora has reached us. The earliest manuscript available at present is of the ninth or tenth century (and it is of the much developed form). However, it is believed to be reflected partially in the Mystagogical Catecheses of St. Cyril of Jerusalem,<sup>7</sup> and of Theodore of Mopsuestia,<sup>8</sup> in the Clementine Liturgy of the Apostolic Constitution – an important document of the fourth century, and in the sermons of John Chrysostom. These witness to the fact that already in the fourth century St. James' anaphora existed in written form in Churches from where these witnesses arise. The anaphora of St. Basil (Byzantine Liturgy) also may help to rediscover the original Anaphora of St. James, since St. Basil probably formulated his Anaphora by shortening the Minor Anaphora of St. James. The Minor Anaphora of St. James possibly can claim more closeness to the ancient Liturgy of Jerusalem<sup>9</sup> than the longer Anaphora of St. James.

#### Jerusalem origin : Aramaic and Greek Forms

Modern liturgists generally agree to the origin of St. James' anaphora from Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> However, the date of its redaction is disputed, though its apostolic origin in its constitutive elements is beyond doubt. The New

3. Cfr. *Ibid.*

4. Cfr. HEGESIPPUS, (Fragments of) "Five Books of Commentaries on the Acts of the Church" in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol. VIII, Michigan, p. 762ff.

5. Cfr. EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccl.* II, 1: IV,3; CYRIL of Jerusalem, *Myst. Cat.* IV, 28; *Apostolic Constitution*, VII, 4, 4b; Constantinople III, Canon 32.

6. This is one of the points on which both Luke (Acts) and Paul agree perfectly.

7. Cfr. *Myst.* IV, 1; V, 4. 8. 9

8. Cfr. *Homilies*, 15 and 16

9. Cfr. E. SKAF, "The Holy and Divine Liturgy of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church", in J. MADEY (ed), *Eucharistic Liturgy in the Christian East*, pp. 281-2.

10. Cfr. E. J. MOUNAYER, *art. cit.*, p. 74



Testament history of the first Christian community of Jerusalem tells us that the first Church of Jerusalem gave birth to Syriac and Greek versions of St. James' anaphora. The earliest Christian community of Jerusalem, formed immediately after the Jerusalem pentecost experience in the first half of the first century, laid much emphasis on worship (Act 2, 42). There were very dynamic worshipping congregations. These were composed of the Jerusalem Jewish Christians who spoke Aramaic and the Hellenistic Christians who spoke Greek (Act 6, 1-7).<sup>11</sup> By A.D. 31/32 these groups parted to separate worship.<sup>12</sup> Thus already in the beginning of the third part of the first half of the first century the Jerusalem church of St. James celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy in two languages - Aramaic and Greek. This must also imply some variance in theology as is reflected in the sermon of Stephen (Act 6, 8-7, 53). It resounds in Hellenistic theology (cfr. also Acts 9, 28-29).

### To Antioch

The linguistic dualism in the worship of the pre-midfirst century Christian groups of Jerusalem Church was providential in the development of the Word of God and of the Jerusalem-Liturgy of St. James. After the martyrdom of Stephen (Ca. A.D. 32 or 33) the Greek-Christian community of Jerusalem was persecuted and it scattered (Acts 8, 1. 4). And the Christians went about preaching the Word (Acts 8, 4). They preached first in the semi-Jewish Samaria, and then in the coastal regions of Palestine

and Phoenicia and thereafter in the Syrian cities of Damascus and Antioch (Ca. A.D. 33 or 35)<sup>13</sup> (Acts 11, 19-20). Those Messianists in Antioch soon grew into a very strong Church. And they preached the Christian Gospel very boldly. The new religious message was received both by Jews and non-Jews (Acts 11, 19-21). About this happy eventuality Luke would say: "And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number that believed turned to the Lord" (Acts 11, 21). The Church of Antioch was universalist: consisting of Jewish and non-Jewish 'converts'. The news of the growth of the Word and the consequent development of the Church in Antioch reached the Jerusalem Church, headed by apostles. Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas to Antioch, who on his arrival marvelled and rejoiced at the grace of the Lord, and confirmed them to remain steadfast in faithfulness (Acts 11, 22-23). Barnabas' work, replete with the Holy Spirit, too added a great number to the community of disciples of Jesus. Later Barnabas and Paul lived there for a whole year and partook in the church gatherings and taught many more people (Acts 11, 26). Peter also came to Antioch (Gal 2, 11). The universalist Church of Antioch was confirmed and strengthened by the chief of the apostles and Paul and Barnabas. To the members of the Antiochene mixed community of the believers of the Lord the outsiders gave the name "christianoï" (Acts 11, 26). This shows that the new community was seen by the outsiders "as a relatively independent group over against the synagogue".<sup>14</sup> They forsook the tradition

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11. Cfr. M. HENGEL, *Between Jesus and Paul*, London, 1983, pp. 1-17; J. A. FITZMYER, "Jewish Christianity in Acts in the light of Qumran Scrolls", in L. KECK - MARTYR (eds), *Studies in Luke-Acts*, London, 1968, p. 237.
  12. Cfr. M. HENGEL, *op. cit.*, pp. 42, 54-55
  13. Cfr. M. HENGEL, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17, 42
  14. M. HENGEL, *op. cit.*, p. 43

of sabbath observance and began observing "the Lord's day".<sup>15</sup> The identification "Christianoi" sheds light also on the character of the worship of this new community. The allegation of cannibalism also goes hand in hand with the new name. The "christianoi" received the Body and Blood of Christ in worship. Besides, the new name contains also the idea that they are a community that worshipped under the leadership of bishop, because without a bishop there is no worship.<sup>16</sup> It needs no high imaginative power to assume that the form of the communal worship of the original Antiochene *Christianoi* could nothing but be what their founders inherited and took with them from Jerusalem, though contextual improvements by adaptation are not impossible. Naturally, it must be the Greek version of the original Jerusalem form that served as the foundation. But to dream of too much difference between the Jerusalem Syriac and Greek forms may console only the dreamer!

Is it possible to assume that around the middle of the first century itself there existed in Antioch a definite form of worship? A positive answer seems quite reasonable. The earliest written document about the Eucharist is that of Paul (1 Cor 11,

23-26). The Pauline Formula is Antiochene.<sup>17</sup> The Lucan form too is similar to the Pauline (though there are linguistic differences) and is Antiochene. Luke's familiarity with the Antiochene Church corroborates this case (Acts 11,19,13,1-3; 15,1-5, 22-35). Both the authors have taken the formula that was used in the Antiochene liturgical tradition. All the while the Lucan form contains a tradition more primitive than the pauline<sup>18</sup> and to allot priority to the tradition behind Mark or Luke is a difficult task, though the needle swings more towards Luke.<sup>19</sup> Luke's special presentation of the Eucharistic narration as Jesus' Last Meal and its characterization as the *Pasch* and the Hebraism of the language may indicate the Jerusalem origin of the tradition, because "there is no reason why tradition should not go back to the Jewish-Christian community of the first years, when the expectation of the kingdom was high".<sup>20</sup> The incensing of which Luke speaks (in Lk 1, 5-10) also could be an element of the Antiochene primitive Christian worship which itself must come from the proto-Christian worship of the Jewish-Christians of the first years. The prayer of the veil (*sūsōpo*) and depiction of the Holy Spirit in

15. Cfr. Rev. 1,10; Acts 29, 7; 1 Cor 16,2; IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Magnasians*, 9,1;
16. See that Ignatius of Antioch repeats this idea, e. g., *Trallians*, 2,1; 3,1; 7,1, *Smyrna*, 8,2. Ignatius firmly believes that only if one is united with the bishop in worship, faith and obedience could he be united with Christ. Cfr. *Ephesians*, 5,1; *Magnasians* 3; 6,2.
17. Cfr. M. HENGEL, *op. cit.*, p. 34; W. BOSSUET, *Kyrios Christos*, p. 120; E. LUCIER, *Nityajivante Rahasyam* (Malayalam translation of *Getting to know the Eucharist*) Chunangamvely 1985, p. 2.
18. Cfr. I. H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke*, Exeter 1978, pp. 800, 804; H. SCHURMANN, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* Duesseldorf 1968, pp. 159-192.
19. Cfr. J. JEREMIAS, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* London 1962, pp. 169-171; H. SCHURMANN, *Der Einsetzungsbericht*, Munster 1955, pp. 94-112; I. H. MARSHALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 805-807.
20. J. DELORME et al., *The Eucharist in the New Testament*, London-Dublin, 1965, p. 39.



the prayer of Epiclesis of the anaphora of St. James in combined typologies and combined allusions to scriptural texts, a mosaic of O.T. and N.T. expressions and allusions, are typically in the Hebrew technique of the Qumran Hodayot (psalms)<sup>21</sup>. And the most striking note about this style is that it is a speciality of Luke's language among the New Testament authors. This mosaic style also is another pointer to the early existence of a definite developed form of the Eucharistic liturgy in the Antiochene church and that itself after the manner of the Jewish-Christian tradition of the first years. As in Jerusalem, in Antioch also, the liturgy was celebrated on the Lord's day (Sunday) in the sanctuary in the leadership of bishop and with the co-operation of the priest's congregation and with the assistance of deacons<sup>22</sup>. In the first century itself there existed in Antioch the anaphora of St. James in a definite form with the fundamentals and some prayers which were carried on to and developed in the subsequent reactions.

The Antiochene Church is basically and originally continuation and extension of the Jerusalem Church. Hellenist Christians from Jerusalem laid the foundation of the Antiochene Church. They transplanted a Greek form of the original Jerusalem worship probably with contextual modifications. The universalist theology of the Antiochene Church must have influenced the Antiochene form during its course of practice and development. Still, the Antiochene form too

preserved the original Jerusalem flavour and tenour. Since the original sources by place and person are the same, similarities between the Aramaic form in Jerusalem and the Greek form in Antioch must be probably more dominant than are elements of dissimilarities between the two<sup>23</sup>. The Antiochene development of the Jerusalem St. James Liturgy scored it another name "The Antiochene order". Today, normally the designation 'Antiochene Liturgy' is taken to mean the form of the Liturgical order as developed by the Monophysites (anti-chalcedonians). St. James Anaphora, born in Jerusalem, brought to, brought up and shaped in Antioch, is rightly called the Jerusalem-Antioch Liturgy of St. James.

#### Pre-Chalcedonian Development of Syriac and Greek forms

We have already seen that Aramaic and Greek forms of the worship took their shape in the Jerusalem Christian communities of the first years. The Greek form was transplanted to Antioch. The Aramaic form continued to exist in Jerusalem till Jerusalem also shifted on to Greek in Liturgy also. When did it happen? Historians differ. Can we connect it with the changes after the fall of Jerusalem? Some Historians suggest the end of the third portion of the second century as the possible period, Egeria witnesses that already in the beginning of the fifth century (between 414-416) the Liturgy was celebrated in Greek in Jerusalem.<sup>25</sup> This Greek

21. Cfr. H. RINGGREN, "Luke's use of the Old Testament; *HTR* 79:1-3 (1986), pp. 227-235, esp. pp. 228-234.

22. Cfr. IGNATIUS OF Antioch, *Magnasians*, 2; 6,1; 9,1; 13,1; *Trall.* 2,1-3; 3,1, 7,1; *Philadelphia* 4; *Smyrna* 6,3; 7,1; 8,12.

23. Take note of the Judaeo-Christian style in the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch.

24. Bring to mind also the opinion that the Gospel according to Matthew was originally written in Aramaic and afterwards it was converted into koine Greek.

25. Between A. D. 414-416 Egeria made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

form might most probably be the Antiochene Greek form which possibly entered Jerusalem after the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 72, with local and contextual modifications. Egeria goes on to report that during the Liturgy the prayers of the Liturgy and bishop's homily during the liturgy were translated into Syriac in order that the common people may understand. And this practice of Syriac translation during the Liturgy itself might have helped the formation of an eventual Jerusalem Syriac version of the Antiochene Greek order of St James anaphora.<sup>26</sup>

Before Chalcedonian problems arose the Anaphora of St James went through a five-stage development: The original Jerusalem Aramaic form; the original Jerusalem Greek version; the original Antiochene Greek form in Antioch; the Jerusalem version of the Antiochene Greek form and lastly its Jerusalem syriac version. The modern Greek form of the anaphora could be at the fourth stage.

#### From Antioch to other Churches and various versions

After the Fall of Jerusalem Antioch took the place of Jerusalem as regards the Christian movement. It became the Christian centre and the missionary centre. Antioch enjoyed control of the missionary work in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. Naturally, the missionaries took the Jerusalem-Antioch Liturgy to the missions. This is the

tradition we find throughout the history of missions. The Jerusalem-Antioch Liturgy seems to have helped the neighbouring Churches in two ways with regard to formation of their liturgies. Some adopted and adapted the anaphora of St James. Others formed their own Liturgies depending on or inspired by the Jerusalem-Antioch Liturgy of St. James. Intensity of imitation and dependence varied. But influence of the Jerusalem-Antioch liturgy in the formation of the ancient liturgies of the East is a plausible historical truth. The privileged position of the Jerusalem-Antioch liturgy of St James, ie., its provenance from St James and Jerusalem and Antioch's ecclesiastical and political prominence in the whole of Oriens<sup>27</sup> could be adduced as factors which accelerated the recognition and influence of the Jerusalem-Antioch Liturgy in the ancient liturgies of the Christian East. The Churches in Palestine, Syria, Georgia, Armenia, Greece and Egypt used St James anaphora. Constantinople and the Greek church of Jerusalem followed it till the fifth and twelfth centuries respectively. Even today on October 23, the Greek Catholic Melkite Churches in Jerusalem, Cyprus and Zante use the liturgy of St James the Minor<sup>28</sup>. In the sixth century the Greek anaphora of St James was translated into Ethiopian and in the seventh century, with Slavonic (Russian) and Armenian. At present these translations are not used in the respective Churches. Presently St James anaphora is the

26. No Manuscript of the Jerusalem Syriac form of Egeria period has reached us.

27. The Petrine foundation of the Apostolic episcopal see of Antioch, the control of the missionary work in the neighbouring countries and the Antiochene theological school contributed to the ecclesiastical prominence of Antioch. The Persian and Jerusalem churches were under Antioch. Jerusalem was made an independent patriarchate only in the Chalcedon Synod. Politically Antioch was the capital of Oriens.

28. Cfr. E.SKAF, "The Holy and Divine Liturgy of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church" in J. MADEY (ed) *op.cit.*, pp.275-324,281.



main liturgical text only in the Syrian Churches of the post-Chalcedonian Antiochene Liturgical tradition.

The pre-Chalcedonian development of St James' Anaphora is a long history. Born in Syriac (Aramic) in the very soil of Jesus' death and Resurrection and the First Pentecost was soon converted into Greek, travelled to Antioch, returned to Jerusalem in still more developed shape and finally converted again into the language of origin. Before Chalcedon the Syriac versions originated in Jerusalem. St James' Jerusalem-Antioch anaphora reached many other countries and Churches through linguistic versions and formulations and redactions of different liturgies.

#### Post-Chalcedonian Development in the Antiochene Churches

Eventually the Chalcedon Synod (451) divided the Antiochene Church in the first stage into two: the Melkites and the Aeephaloi (non-Chalcedonians). Those who accorded to the synod were the Melkites (meaning, those who stood with the king). They were the Orthodox (true faith) Christians.<sup>29</sup> The non-Chalcedonians gradually were unified as the "Jacobites", and still later also renowned as the Syrian Church of Antioch.

The Melkites (Orthodox) inhabited mainly in cities with Greek as the official language. And Greek continued to be their language of worship. Their Patriarch resided in Antioch. They continued to use the anaphora of St James. Later on they went closer

to the Byzantine traditions and adopted the Byzantine Liturgy, which itself was born in Antioch and was shaped there or elsewhere before it was brought to Byzantium.<sup>30</sup> The Liturgy of the Word of the Melkite Greek Church of the present is of Antiochene origin.<sup>31</sup> Many of their later anaphoras are common with the Syrian Antiochene tradition.

The Liturgy of the Maronite Church, an off-shoot of the Chalcedonians was originally St James'; but later adopted Sāār (very close to Addai-Mari anaphora). However the Maronite liturgy is attached to the Syrian Antiochene by "its ritual structure, the literary genius of its prayers, the patristic patrimony etc."<sup>32</sup>

It is the Syrian Church of Antioch that contributed substantially to the latest developments to the Jerusalem-Antioch anaphora of St James, as they alone continued it fully after the division and growth of the Antiochene Church into three in the second stage in the post-Chalcedonian era. The present West Syriac forms of the anaphora of St James are due to the works of the Jacobite fathers of subsequent centuries. The Jacobites of Antioch lived mostly in villages with Syriac as the languages of conversation. Syriac was taken also for the language of their liturgy. Mar Yaqob Burdana is said to have made in the sixth century the first Syriac translation of the complete Antiochene Greek text of the anaphora of St James. Thus in Antioch itself is born the Syriac version of the Jerusalem-Antioch Liturgy. Naturally the Syrians

29. It is a funny turn in the history of the term "Orthodox" that it is taken up also by non-Chalcedonian churches.

30. Cfr. L. BOUYER, *Eucharistic, theologie et spiritualite de la priere eucharistique* Paris 1966, p. 142.

31. Cfr. E. SKAF *art.cit.*, p.279

32. E. KHOURY, "Genesis and development of the Maronite Divine Liturgy" in J. MADEY (ed), *op. cit.*, pp. 101-131, 103,

inserted new dogmatic elements influenced by the Christological controversies of the time and group (e.g. the Trisagion as addressed to Christ, changed from its original theological stance.) Mar Burdana's translation was unsatisfactory. It was not faithful to the Greek original. Mar Yaqob of Edessa (640-708) revised the Syriac version with the help of Greek texts. Afterwards renowned Syriac scholars and liturgists as Moses Bar Kepha (813-903) and Mar Dionysius Bar Salibi (+1173) enlarged the text adding more prayers. Thus there came into existence a new longer Syriac text of the anaphora of St James. This longer text is at present used in the Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholic Churches of Antioch.<sup>33</sup>

In the Persian Maphrianate,<sup>34</sup> Mar Gregorios Bar Hebraeus (+1286) revised the Syriac text also abridging certain prayers. The Malankara Syrian Church(es) follow the Barttebraeus-revised and abridged form of the Antiochene Syrian liturgy. The Jacobites in Palestine continued the Syriac version in slightly different way.

The Jacobites themselves developed the Antiochene Syrian liturgy in three ways: the Western style among the Syrian province, the Maphrianate Eastern form of Persian and the Jerusalem form of Palestine. At present St. James' Jerusalem-Antioch Liturgy is used now here in its original form.

#### An Enrichment to the Indian Church

In the second half of the seventeenth century the Antiochene

Syrian Liturgy was introduced in India—a providential consequence of the Portuguese Missionary work in India—through Antiochene Jacobite prelates. From 1751 on the abridged form of the Antiochene Syrian anaphora became the basic text of the liturgy of the Malankara Syrian community (Puthenkoottukar).

Theologically and ecclesiologically viewed the introduction of the Antiochene Syrian Liturgy into India has turned to be a contribution of history towards a better understanding, recognition and appreciation and enrichment of the catholicity of the church in India. Indian Church is enabled to enjoy another antique liturgical tradition also. The coming and presence of the Antiochene Syrian version of the Jerusalem-Antioch Liturgy of St James into this eastern country is a boon and boost to the original Syrian Christian tradition of the Indian church. It accelerates the re-orientalizing process of the St Thomas Syrian church (es) and binds together a good number of christians who bear vestiges of the Syria-Palestinian traditions. It enjoys the coveted status of being an ecumenical chorus of at least five particular churches confessing allegiance to different heads and faiths.

#### An Ecumenical Endeavour proposed

The Jerusalem-Antioch Liturgical order of St. James already keeps the Syrian churches of India and elsewhere in an ecumenical tact. Could these Syrian Churches following the Antiochene Syrian liturgical traditions put in a concerted effort to re-discover

33. In 1934 Malankara Syrian Catholic Archbishop Mar Ivanios of Trivandrum printed this longer version for the use of the Malankara Catholics. Cfr. L. MOOLEVETIL, *Yākōbinte anāphura oru Paṭhanam* (Malayalam), Kōttayam 1976, p. 268, a. i.

34. This is the Persian region under the spiritual supervision of Maphrian, a representative appointed of the Patriarch of Antioch, who governed the diaspora Jacobites in Persia.



# Ecumenical Strategies of the Malankara Catholic Church

We live in an age of pluralism in which there is nevertheless a widespread and sincere desire for mutual understanding, coupled with a real thirst for universality. The Christian ecumenical movement is a prime example of this general trend towards a global perspective and an important one for the shaping of the future. The ecumenical movement is now in the process of being widened and deepened into what is sometimes called "the wider ecumenism" or "the ecumenism of the world religions" (Hans Kung).

Avery Dulles, in his treatises on the Church,<sup>1</sup> has presented various models for the Church and prescribed ecumenical strategies in a pluralistic age. In relation to the actual religious situation, ecumenism might take as its proximate goal the achievement

of a heterogeneous community of witnessing dialogue. Such heterogeneous communities might be modelled on friendship rather than on the spiritual family and might be established among groups of Christians whose ideas they could not mutually share.

It should be acknowledged that every Christian tradition contains insights of potential value for the rest. In this sense the existence of multiple autonomous traditions has been, providentially, a means of preserving pluralism at a time when there might have been too little tolerance for differences in any one organizational church. It would be most unfortunate if the ecumenical imperative meant that the separate traditions had nothing better than to "die" for the sake of christian unity. Today, however,

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the original theological wealth of the Jerusalem – Antioch anaphora it would be a unique contribution towards the cause of ecumenism. They could even attempt at re-constructing the fundamentals of the original form of St. James anaphora – a very difficult task<sup>4</sup>

perhaps even impossible. But that will surely help them get nearer to the apostolic era. A project of restoring the Syrian Liturgy according to the norms of the Syrian Fathers<sup>35</sup> is another desirable ecumenical field inviting especially these syrian Christians.

Kurian Valuparampil

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1. *Models of the Church* (Image Books, New York, 1978); *The Resilient Church* (Doubleday & Co., New York, 1977); *The Catholicity of the Church* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1985).

35. G. KHOURI-SARKIS, *L'Orient Syrien*, vol. 9 (1964), pp. 409–442 and vol. 10 (1965), pp. 1–40 presents such a project.

there is an increasing agreement that the only worthwhile unity will be one which gathers up all the enriching diversity of the varying Christian traditions. Instead of striving after uniformity, the Church should constantly try to evoke and stimulate man's creativity, to encourage and maintain diversity in communion and communion in diversity.

Dulles finds pluralism very great, perhaps too great, in some of the Protestant churches, but too slow to assert itself in Roman Catholicism. He attributes the strong centralization in modern Catholicism to historical accidents and suggests that the decentralization of the future will involve a certain measure of de-Romanization. In principle it is not only possible but also desirable for Christianity to assume different forms suited to different socio-cultural situations.

The "uniate model" – that is, the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church of the West and the so-called "uniate" churches of the East – has sometimes been proposed as an alternative concept of unity. However, the term "uniatism" generally means the submission of one church to the doctrinal and ecclesiological principles of another, in return for the permission to retain its own liturgical and canonical practices. It has, however, been pointed out that this type of procedure leads to an unfortunate dissociation between liturgical rite and discipline on the one hand, and theological, doctrinal, confessional typology on the other.

H. E. Cardinal Willebrands, president of the Vatican Secretariat for

Promoting Christian Unity, has endorsed the idea of typological diversity within a single ecclesial allegiance<sup>2</sup>. He has also proposed the ecclesiology of communion as "a central insight for the future development of ecumenism".<sup>3</sup> Theologians such as Yves Congar, M-J. Le Guillou, Jerome Hamer and Joseph Ratzinger have taken up the theme of "Communio" as a central motive for understanding the nature and structure of the Church.

The Church as a communion is embodied not only in the "universal" communion of the faithful the world over and down the ages, but also in each local community that remains in "communion" with the universal Church. This type of ecclesiology has a better basis in the biblical notion of communion (koinonia) and is ecumenically very fruitful, being far more congenial to Protestants and Orthodox and being the basis of the Catholic ecclesiologies of Augustine and Aquinas.

The way to achieve unity, in today's "inter-contextual" ecumenical method, is not by "one common theology" or by "one common ecclesiology" but by means of a "communion of faith", maintained through and in spite of the diversity of the churches and their diverse contexts and theologies.<sup>4</sup> Herein lies the unique role of the Malankara Catholic Church, which belongs to the family of the syrian churches of India and is at the same time in communion with the Roman Catholic Church which has the strongest claim for universality in today's world. This Church takes root from the seeds of faith sown by the Apostle Thomas, survived the vicissitudes of

2. Address in Cambridge, England, *Documents on Anglican/Roman Catholic Relations*. Washington, D. C., 1972, p. 39
3. "One in Christ", 1975 – Vol. XI, No. 4, p. 313
4. See Kuncheria Pathil: "The Twentieth Century Encounter of the Churches" in *Religions in Dialogue: East and West Meet* (University Press of America, 1985) pp. 140-1.



history, inherited one of the most ancient liturgies and came to communion with the Catholic Church as an individual Church with all its prerogatives and obligations. It has indeed to be seen as a denomination of the Christian Church with its own liturgy, customs, traditions and structure, most of which it shares with its sister Malankara Churches.

If the Koonan Cross oath of 1653, by which a section of the Syrian Church broke off from the Roman communion, was a revolt against the Western Church's refusal to recognize the identity and individuality of the Malankara Church, the historic "reunion" of 1930 was, to a certain extent, the retrieval of that due recognition. The significant element in the "reunion" is the coming together in unity of the separated Christian churches. According to the ecumenical thinking of our day, the mutual relationship among the churches is more important than the return of individual separated brethren into the Catholic Church. The ministerial role of the Malankara Catholic Church, therefore, consists in serving as a link and a bridge between the Churches.

It is noteworthy that, in his address to the members of this church during his visit to Trivandrum on February 8, 1986 Pope John Paul II said: "Today I wish to encourage you in your faith, in your fidelity to your ancient traditions, in your sincere efforts to promote fraternal relations with your brothers and sisters of the Jacobite and Orthodox Churches, and other ecclesial communions."<sup>5</sup>

Communion with the Catholic church was, in fact, initiated by the Reunion movement", but it is incomplete in more than one sense. The liabilities of the Malankara Catholic Church are:

1. It lacks the patriarchal form of government prevalent in the Eastern Churches. It has, therefore, to strive towards obtaining at least a Catholicos or a major archbishop as its common head.

2. It lacks a proper code of canon law and constitution of its own. Its present structure is not different from that of the Latin (Roman) Church.

3. It has not been able to evolve a theology or spirituality based on its ancient traditions nor train its clergy along the same lines. It is hoped that the opening of the Malankara Catholic Theological Seminary will remedy this disability to some extent. We may also legitimately hope that the present leadership of the Malankara Catholic Church will find the same "wisdom and sensitivity to the cause of Christian unity" in the present Pope as Mar Ivanios found in Pope Pius XI.<sup>6</sup>

On the credit side, the Malankara Catholic Church steadfastly clung to the most venerable and sublime of Oriental liturgies it has inherited by divine providence—a liturgy which provides a living link with the ante-Nicene Church and even the Apostolic Cell in Jerusalem and one which is also beautifully adapted to the Eucharistic devotion of Indian worshippers. This Church, therefore, having jealously preserved its West Syrian liturgy and many of the Antiochene traditions, which have since been contextualized in the course of three centuries, is in a more advantageous position to act as a catalyst in the Indian Context. Along with other Malankara Churches, it rejected latinization during the European missionary thrust, but in order to assert its credibility with its brethren of the separated Churches,

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5. ORIGINS, NC Documentary Service, February 20, 1986 (Vol. 15, no. 36), p. 591  
 6. *ibid.*

it should now prove itself to be something more than a mere "uniate" model or just a province of the Roman Church.

In the fields of evangelization and pastoral care, the Syro-Malankara Church is now in a position to assert its legitimate rights, consequent on the provisions in the recent letter of Pope John Paul II to the Catholic bishops of India. It is hoped that the implementation of these provisions would help to perfect the communion of the Malankara Church with the Roman Catholic Church and enable it to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the other churches. The next step in the future of ecumenism will be regular inter-communion and inter-celebration. Conciliar fellowship and an ecumenical synod will be yet another distinctive goal of the ecumenical movement.

Nevertheless, Conciliar fellowship and an ecumenical council participated by all the Churches will not be the end of the Churches' search for unity, but only a beginning. It will be the beginning of a new life together, a new way of being and living: for the churches it will be the beginning of

a new journey together with other religions and the whole of mankind. In the encounter of the churches with the other religions and ideologies, the lessons they have learned in their own encounter will be of great value and the stages and patterns of the new encounter could be more or less the same. However, unity of the Church will be fully achieved only when the whole humanity will be fully united, when the *oikoumene* will actually include the whole world.<sup>7</sup>

In the meanwhile, with this world vision of the ecumenical movement in view, the growing and dynamic "little flock" of the Malankara Catholic Church could prove a powerful instrument for the evangelization and spiritual enrichment of our vast sub-continent, in fulfilment of the prophetic words of Pope John Paul II: "May your constant aspiration be that the time will soon come when the prayer of Our Lord for perfect unity among his disciples will be realized ... so that the Church in every place and in every age may shine forth as a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy spirit."<sup>8</sup>

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7. Kuncheria Pathil, *op. cit.* pp. 143-4

8. ORIGINS, *ibid.* p. 591.



# The Thomas Christians

## Judaeo - Buddhist - Hindu - Christians ?

Often in books on the Thomas Christians in India one may find remarks that they were converted from Hinduism and that they are Hindu Christians. A few have partly challenged this hypothesis and asserted that they were predominantly not Hindu Christians but Judaeo-Christians. It appears that one of the influential sections of the St. Thomas Christians in India was Buddhist converts.

It is difficult to testify regarding the religion of the early inhabitants of Kerala. It might have been a kind of nature worship as one finds even today among the tribals in Kerala. In a subsequent period one finds the religion of the Dravidians, which is very close to the worship of the early inhabitants of Mexico, and Egypt. In a later period Hinduism spread.

The period immediately before Christ, one finds a rapid spread of Buddhism in Kerala. According to some, Buddhism found adherents among the family of the Perumals, the rulers of Chera (Kerala). Cranganore (Kodungalloor) was the most important centre of Kerala life. It had a port and it was the meeting point between East and West, between China and West Asia and even Europe. It was the cultural and commercial centre. Trikkannāmatilakam, a few kilometres west of Irinjālakuda, and Sabarimala regions (Nilackal) were the most important Buddhist centres. When large number of the inhabitants of Kerala became Buddhists, there arose conflicts between Hindus and Buddhists. Gradually, Buddhists lost some of their

centres and they became a minority. Some of them migrated to Srilanka (Ceylon). Thus Sabarimala, a Buddhist centre in central Kerala came under the control of the Hindus. Those Buddhists who returned to Hinduism continued to visit the shrine at Sabarimala, their former Buddhist centre. Even today there are evident signs to demonstrate that Sabarimala was a Buddhist centre – the recital of Saranam: the devotees of the Sabarimala Pratishtha recite continuously throughout their journey “swāmiyē, sarana Ayyappa”, “Saranam” is typically a Buddhist feature: “Sangam saranam gachāmi, sṛtyam dharmam saranam gachāmi, Budham saranam gachāmi.”

When Christianity reached Kerala in 52 A. D. many of the people who were under Buddhist influence—Ahimsa, human fraternity etc.—and who were persecuted by the Hindus, accepted the new religion, which, according to them, perfected their religious sentiments.

The Christians were known in Kerala as “Mārgakkār” and “Mārgawāsikal”. The word used for the process of Christianisation was “Margam kūduka”. “Mārgam” is a typical Buddhist expression. Buddhism has “ashtamārgam”. “Margam” is “way” and is in Christian tradition biblically based (Acts 9:2).

Until recently in certain parts of Kerala the Christians were ridiculed as “Baudhanmār” (Buddhists). The Christians used to call the non-Christians *Ajñārikal*. This expression has found place even in the liturgical books.

# Documentation

## Circular Letter on Ecumenical Teaching

From The Secretariat of Promoting Christian Unity

In his covering letter of December 15, 1986 to the episcopal conferences, which accompanied this document, Cardinal Johannes Willebrands noted that this circular letter: "... has been required both in view of the new structuring of studies in theology faculty programmes and because of provisions in the New Code of Canon Law. The content of this letter will be incorporated and expounded in the Ecumenical Directory which is now being revised in the light of orientations given at the last Plenary Meeting of our Secretariat (February 1986)".

### Circular Letter to Bishops on Certain Aspects of Ecumenical Teaching in Catholic Theological Institutions

#### INTRODUCTION

1. The new Code of Canon Law states that the formation of students for the priesthood should include instruction on "dealing with people, including non-Catholics and unbelievers" (can 256 § 1) and on "ecumenical questions" (can. 256 § 2).

2. In his first address to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in November 1978, Pope John Paul II stressed the importance of this task: "The Council demands a particular effort in teaching theology and forming the attitudes of future priests" (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 10). This is especially

Buddhism is known as "*gnānamārgam*" (gnosticism in the right sense). Hence *ajñānikal*" meant those who do not belong to Buddhism and eventually to Christianity. *Mōksham* (Mukti, *Mōchanam*, *Nirvānam*—salvation), *Mōkshathil pōvuka* (to go to heaven) etc are Buddhist terminologies. These expressions are even today prevalent among the Thomas Christians.

The Buddhists used to shave their heads. This custom was widely prevalent in India among the Thomas Christians. From early childhood they used to shave their heads. Wearing a white cloth, and a covering (*randām*

*mundu*) also are remnants of the Buddhist traditions.

The expressions "*dharmakkār* (beggars), "*dharmam kodukkuka*" (give alms) etc. are still prevalent among the Christians and others in Kerala. It reminds us of the Buddhist monks who used to wander around reciting, "*dharmam saranam gachāmi*". The expression, "*palli*" (ekklesia), "*pallikoodam*" (school), "*palliyōgam*" (parish council), "*pētta*" (village) etc. are remnants of Buddhism. All these point to the hypothesis that the early converts to Christianity in India were a Judaeo-Buddhist-Hindu Community.

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important now, when this teaching must take account of the dialogues which are in progress. Once they are engaged in this ministry, how will these priests be able under their bishop's direction to find judicious and pastorally responsible ways of informing the faithful about the dialogues and their progress, if they have not yet been initiated into them during their training?" (Address of November 18, 1978). From the beginning of his pontificate, the Pope has also insisted on the need for Christians to bear a common witness (cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, 11 and this too "will call for a new effort of ecumenical formation and deepening of mutual understanding" (Address at Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, June 12, 1984). Such formation, so necessary for all Catholics (cf. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 32), is all the more necessary for those who as priests are to exercise a special service of unity.

3. There are, however, places in which it seems that it has not yet been possible to attend in giving a proper place in the teaching of Catholic teachers at Catholic theological institutions to the required ecumenical dimension of the teaching of Catholic theology. In other places it appears that ecumenical teaching must be judged to be disproportionate in quantity in relation to the whole theological programme, while elsewhere it is so inadequate as not to fulfil the genuine concept of ecumenical formation. Hence there have arisen misunderstandings, and at times even misinterpretations, of the *Ecumenical Directory Part II* (1970), which could lead also to some confusion in the realm of doctrine.

4. As regards the application of the norms of the *Ecumenical Directory* concerning the teaching of ecumenism in Theological Faculties, it should be noted that, with the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (1979), a new situation has arisen, different from that which existed when the *Directory* was published. The new Constitution provides for three Cycles in the curriculum of Theological Faculties, whereas the *Ecumenical Directory* referred to the two Cycles required by the previous Constitution, *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*. Consequently, the *Directory* divided the students of the Theological Faculties into only two categories, namely those who had already completed the theological formation required in the Cycle for the Licentiate (*a fortiori* in that for the Doctorate) and those who had not obtained academic degrees (cf. *Ecumenical Directory*, II, n. 83). Since students are now divided into three categories, according to the three Cycles of the Faculties, it has become necessary to apply the norms of the *Ecumenical Directory* more precisely to this new situation. It is a matter, then, of making these norms more precise and of complementing them.

5. For all these reasons, the Secretariat for promoting Christian Unity, after due consultation with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Congregation for Catholic Education, is now writing to all Episcopal Conferences to give some precise indications regarding ecumenical teaching. What is said here of Theological Faculties applies also *mutatis mutandi*, to *Seminaries* and other *Centres* which, although not Faculties, offer theological teaching, since this should clearly be in full harmony with the aims of the ecumenical renewal.

## I. Formation in Ecumenism

6. Normal theological teaching by Catholic professors and teachers in Catholic Theological Institutions should take full account of the ecumenical

dimension of Catholic theology. Consequently, every Catholic teacher, explaining the various tracts and courses, should give full weight to the *ecumenical aspects* therein involved. Furthermore, Catholic Theological Institutions have the task of completing this formation with suitable *courses on ecumenism* as a subject in its own right, these too given by Catholic teachers. This "means both including the ecumenical dimension in courses of theology and giving explicit teaching on the ecumenical movement, its history, its theological and pastoral significance, and the new advances which are taking place through it" (John Paul II, *Address to delegates of ecumenical commissions*, April 27th, 1985).

7. Ecumenical formation implies, then, an adequate and balanced knowledge of Catholic doctrine regarding the ecumenical material that is studied.

## II. Lecturers from other Churches and Ecclesial Communities

8. Where, the better to ensure a proper ecumenical formation, the competent authority judges that in the local religious context it is advisable to ask teachers or professors from other Churches and ecclesial Communities to assist in a Catholic Theological Institution (cf. *Ecumenical Directory* II, no. 90), it should be borne in mind that such teaching will be concerned solely with the doctrinal positions of the Churches and ecclesial Communities they represent. Their work and their first-hand information will complete the ecumenical formation the students have already received from Catholic teachers.

9. Teaching offered by a member of another Church or ecclesial Community is given in the context of the dialogue-relationships between the Catholic Church and other Churches and ecclesial Communities. But in itself it does not formally correspond to the structures of the *ecumenical dialogue*, since the teaching given in Catholic Theological Institutions has as its goal simply the *formative studies* of the students.

### 10. Concerning teachers from other Churches and ecclesial Communities

a) It is the responsibility of the competent ecclesiastical and academic authorities to determine, in conformity with the directives issued by the Episcopal Conference on the basis of the relevant documents of the Holy See, whether or not it is opportune or necessary to invite professors or teachers from other Churches or ecclesial Communities to give conferences, courses, etc. in a Catholic Theological Institution, in accordance with the "differences between various nations and regions, differences deriving from varying individual maturity and experience, differences also resulting from the various state of relationships .. between the Catholic Church and other Churches or ecclesial Communities" (*Ecumenical Directory*, II no. 65; cf. also nn. 84, 91).

b) It is also the responsibility of the same authorities to invite in this way only such teachers, lecturers and professors from other Churches or ecclesial Communities who not only possess the necessary religious, moral and professional qualifications, but also are truly representative of their confessions and evince a truly ecumenical spirit.

c) Teachers from other Churches and ecclesial Communities will be classified as "visiting lecturers".

d) In accordance with normal academic practice and to ensure a proper coordination in the teaching given, teachers from other Churches and ecclesial



Communities should offer in advance to those in charge of the Catholic Theological Faculties, Seminaries, Institutes or Schools of Theology a suitable synopsis of the teaching they are to give.

e) Where necessary, Catholic Institutions will organize seminars or courses to put into context the teaching given by lecturers from other Churches or ecclesial Communities.

### III. Ecumenical formation, A gradual process

11. Like all formation, ecumenical formation must involve a *gradual process*. This "principle of graduality" finds its clearest application in the present three-cycle structure of the academic theological curriculum. Consequently, in view of what has been said in no. 4 above, the courses given by lecturers from other Churches or ecclesial Communities, will find their proper place in the *Second and Third Cycles of Faculties*. In these Cycles lectures from other Churches or ecclesial Communities can give teaching of an historical and expository character, as for instance concerning the "status", the credal statements, the structures of their Church or ecclesial Community, its position in the ecumenical movement and in the World Council of Churches.

12. Since the purpose of the *First Cycle* of Faculties is to offer an organic and complete exposition of Catholic doctrine (cf. Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*, art. 72a), in this Cycle, as also in theological courses at non-academic level (*Seminaries, Religious Houses of Study*), lecturers from other Churches and ecclesial Communities will not be asked to give systematic or formative courses. But in this cycle courses of a technical nature can be entrusted to such teachers, as, for example, languages, communications media, religious sociology, etc. in accordance with the provisions made by the Bishop or the Episcopal Conference (cf. *Ecumenical Directory*, II, nn. 84, 92).

13. It will be the responsibility of the Theological Centre or Institute to make a report to the local Ordinary or to the Grand Chancellor of the University concerning courses given by members of other Churches and ecclesial Communities.

### Conclusion

14. We are grateful to bishops, who, we are sure, will give attention to this important aspect of a complete theological formation, so that through a truly balanced formation, students may be well grounded in their own faith, open to dialogue and, as we hope, may become builders of unity.

## Book Reviews

**Emilianos Timiadus:** *Nicene Creed. Our Common Faith*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1983 \$ 6. 95, P. 128.

The creed first promulgated by the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) and elaborated later by the subsequent council is here meant by the Nicene Creed which is generally known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed. The Council of Nicaea dealt with the dogma of the Holy Trinity and especially with the divinity of the Father and of Christ. The council of Constantinople is claimed to have completed this creed by affirming the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and other dimensions of the Christian faith, namely the genuine notes of the Church, resurrection of the dead and the eternal life on which the Nicene creed in 325 A.D. had nothing to say. It is the summary of the Christian faith and provides our response to different heresies. It is recited in the Eucharistic assemblies of all Churches. The author examines the articles of faith contained in it and devotes a detailed study on the problem of filioque which was added to it only later in the Latin Church.

The author throws light on the practical bearing of the creed. These articles of faith bind all Christians of all ages. We need commit ourselves to the faith taught in it. In spite of the fact that many Churches are using it they are still divided and subdivided. A mere proclamation of our common faith is not enough to eliminate the existing doctrinal tensions and divisions. It should pervade the whole structure, discipline, ethics, spirituality and daily belief of each member of the Church.

Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil

**Peter Kawerau:** *Ostkirchengeschichte*. 1-3 (CSCO 451. 441. 442 / Subsidia 70.64.65), Louvain, 1983, 1982, 1982.

Vol I: Christianity in Asia and Africa until the presence of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. This volume has six chapters dealing with 1) the Christianity in Asia in 70 pages (in Jerusalem, Antioch, Edessa, Persia, India, Armenia, Georgia, Central Asia, China, Siberia, Arabia and the Persian Gulf); 2) the Christianity in Africa in 30 pages (in Alexandria, Egypt, Nubia, Phila and Ethiopia); 3) the Syrian and Egyptian monasticism in 52 pages: the leading figures of these two monastic traditions are analysed and their chief characteristics are presented; 4) Nestorianism and Monophysitism in 22 pages: this chapter explains the events leading to Ephesus and Chalcedon, the role of St. Cyril, and the outburst of Monophysitism and the spread of the Jacobite Church in the middle ages; it speaks also of the "Nestorian Church in Persia" and the spread of Diophysitism in West Asia; 5) the Oriental Canon Law in 13 pages; 6) the appearance of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean in 16 pages.

Vol. II: Christianity in the Eastern Roman-Byzantine Empire upto the conquest of Constantinople by the Osmanian Turks. This volume too has six chapters dealing with the various aspects of the Byzantine Christianity. 1) the general survey of the Byzantine Church history in 10 pages; 2) the history



of the Byzantine church written in the West 17 pages; 3) the Byzantine historiography in 20 pages; 4) the Byzantine theology in 67 pages; 5) the Byzantium monasticism in 21 pages 6) Byzantium as historical authority. It gives a comprehensive picture of the Byzantine church.

Vol. III: Christianity in Europe and Asia in the age of the Crusades: This part has seven chapters: 1) Presuppositions and spiritual-religious basis of the Crusades in 38 chapters; 2) the Popes and the Crusades in 13 pages; 3) the popular Crusades in 14 pages; 4) the Crusades of the Knights in 58 pages; 5) the victory of Islam (1260-91) (6 pages); 6) the Latin Church in the East (19 pp.); 7) the echo and after effect of the Crusades (22 pp.)

Each volume has in the beginning a very detailed "table of contents". Going through the contents itself one gets almost a whole and detailed picture of the subjects treated in the volumes. Then there is a bibliography in each volume. The bibliography is according to topics and places and themes. But the book does not give references to statements and the presentation is popular. It does in no way diminish the value of the volumes published in the famous CSCO.

G. Chediath

**Chrétiens Syriaques sous les Abbassides surtout à Bagdad (749-1258), by Jean Maurice Fiey, Louvain, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1980, vol. 420, Subsidia tomus 59. pp. XXII-301.**

The Arab as well as the Islamic world was dominated for more than five hundred years by a dynasty which descended from Mohamet's uncle, Abbas. Hence its name: The Abbassids. Under the reign of the second caliph, Al-Mansur, Bagdad, originally known as The City of Peace, was founded. It remained the brilliant capital of the dynasty till the Mongols conquered it in 1758.

Christianity in Bagdad and in Mesopotamia for that matter, the territory of which mostly corresponds to that of modern Iraq, was represented by the two Syriac Churches, the Nestorian or East-Syrian, and the Jacobite or West-Syrian. There was also a small number of Melkites, who were Byzantines from the Levant.

Father J. M. Fiey, the learned French Dominican from Beirut, has not only put to use all the Syriac. i. e. Christian, sources available, but also the Arabic material, above all the Muslim historians and geographers. It enables him to provide his reader with a graphic picture of the whole Abbassid period caliph by caliph, but focussed on the relations between that Muslim power and the local Christians. For, as the subtitle has it, the author speaks mostly of the situation of the Christians in Bagdad itself. It necessarily includes portraits of all the East-Syrian catholicos, whose see was also in the city and whose pontificates corresponded to the successive caliphs, in fact 36 catholicos against 37 Muslim rulers. The Jacobite primates (maphrians), though rarely found in Bagdad, are not neglected either.

The treatment meted out to Christians, the *dimmi*, under the Abbassids depended on a number of circumstances. The most important can be listed as follows: the influence of the Christian physicians, mostly East-Syrian, at court, whose presence at the caliph's side goes back to the second ruler, Al-Mansur (754-775), and lasts almost till the capture of Bagdad by the



## News

### Reaction to the letter of Pope John Paul II to the bishops of India

Whether there is anything new in the recent letter of the Pope to the Indian bishops can be disputed. Some feel it is a repetition of the Vat. II Council decree on Oriental Churches, perhaps with some hesitation.

The first impression is that the Latin hierarchy seems to have 'accepted' the verdict of the Pope. But as time elapses the protests are becoming more and more manifest. Many false statistics and propaganda have begun to appear in the official publications of the Latin Church in India.

The CBCI president has asked all to begin now to educate our clergy and people in interritual matters! An imperative long over due since the Vatican Council! 'This education should have begun in the seminaries. The only papal seminary in India is the present J. D. V in Poona and it is a pity that so far the letter of the Pope has not created any impact on the authorities. The attitude prevailing among authorities seems to be "the

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Mongols; the nearly permanent presence of Christian secretaries (some of them became quasi-vizirs), as well as astronomers-astrologers; the uneven application on the Christians of the discriminatory measures, foreseen by Islamic tradition, such as vestimetry restrictions and special taxes; quarrels, often bloody, among the Muslims themselves, above all, between Shiites and Sunnites, which could eventually affect the local Christians. Much of those factors, besides several minor ones, are analyzed by the author not only with great precision, but also often with a deep sense of humour.

It cannot be said that any systematic persecution of Christians was launched by any of those caliphs, yet there were many outbursts of anti-Christian sentiment, coming either from the populace, or from high-placed officials, or even from one of the rulers, who happened to dislike religious minorities. Such outbursts could only last a few hours, enough, however, to destroy, at least to damage, Christian buildings. For instance, the catholicos' residence in Baghdad had to be restored, if not rebuilt, so many times! It was also due to anti-Christian reactions that Takrit, the see of the Jacobite maphrian, had to be abandoned between 1089 and 1106.

A certain state of oppression, between periods of real peace and prosperity, explains why the conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols was greeted by all Christians as a liberation. Granted that the latter were never suppressed by force under the Abbassids, it remains that they had become increasingly margined. Indeed the Islam of the Arabs can be regarded as tolerant, though tolerance with a vengeance. The minorities were treated with condescendence, as necessary evils, not as contributing to religious enticement. Tolerance based on a superiority complex is no real tolerance. It is religious dominance tempered by contrivances to keep peace. They included state-interferences in patriarchal elections, the bakhshesh, and the exile of unending prelates. Divisions among the Christians themselves did not always help them to present a common front. History repeats itself, such as the tensions existing among Christians in the today's Lebanon, so much torn already into pieces.

E. R. Hambye s. j.  
Rome



mediaeval attitude": There is only one Rite in the Church, and the Universal Church means the Latin Church!

### 1. International Syriac Conference at SEERI, Kottayam, India

An International Syriac Conference was held at SEERI, Kottayam, India from 7 to 12 September 1987. It was the first of its kind conducted in India. SEERI (St. Ephrems' Ecumenical Research Institute) was founded on 14th Sept. 1985.

Many experts in Syriac Language, literature, history and Syriac Christian heritage from Britain, Europe, U.S. A., Australia, Iraq, Lebanon and India presented scholarly papers in the Conference. Among the participants there were priests, men and women religious and lay people. The talks, discussion, informal sharing and living together enabled both the speakers and the participants to share their ideas and experiences, appreciate and deepen various christian heritages. It was a unique chance for all to discover and appreciate the values hidden in various strains of the Syriac heritage. Many hold in high esteem only the Latin heritage and despise everything Eastern and Syriac. The main reason is ignorance and lack of contact with the Syriac and Eastern heritages. Knowledge of Syriac is a *conditio sine qua non* to delve deep into these treasures. This conference was an eye-opener and a humble but bold attempt. One cannot claim to be a true heir of the Syriac heritage if he is ignorant of its riches: one who is ignorant cannot appreciate its beauty and vitality; one who fails to appreciate and love it will automatically despise it and embrace the Latin heritage.

### 2. One-Day Seminar at Paurastya Vidyapitham, Kottayam, India

Under the joint auspices of Paurastya Vidyapitham and St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, India, a one-day seminar was conducted on 31st October, 1987. The topics chosen for discussion were: (i) the Circular letter concerning studies of the Oriental Churches in Faculties, issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education on January 5th, 1987; (ii) the letter of Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of India on May 28th, 1987 concerning the Latin-Oriental relations.

Dr. Vellanickal, the President of the Paurastya Vidyapitham introduced the Circular Letter to the audience. The letter asks the Faculties to introduce studies of the Eastern Churches into the curriculum. The Church of Christ has two lungs - Eastern and Western. Dr. Vellanickal remarked that the letter means by the Eastern tradition, mostly the Greek Tradition. But there is another equally important Eastern Tradition, namely the Syriac Oriental tradition, the tradition of the "lesser Eastern Churches." It is the duty of Paurastya Vidyapitham and the Eastern Syriac Churches in India to learn this tradition, appreciate explain and propagate it.

Church is a Communion of Churches. All the Churches are of equal importance. One is not superior to the other. This truth has to be admitted as the basic principle of just solution to the Latin - Oriental situation in India - said Dr. Koodapuzha, Vice-president of Paurastya Vidyapitham. The letter of the Pope is a move in this direction and he praised the Pope for taking this bold step. He deplored the negative reaction expressed from different quarters of the Latin Church in India. Delaying to obey and implement the directives of the Holy See is nothing but disobedience to the Holy See. Pope has asked to educate priests, religious and the faithful so that they may accept



the decision joyfully. Unfortunately very little is being done, on the contrary negative propaganda is going on in the Latin Church. The seminar was an occasion to conscientise the Seminarians and the Staff.

### **3. Oriental Churches Represented at October 1987 Synod**

#### **Patriarchs – Their Beatitudes:**

Stephanos II Ghattas, Patriarch of Alexandria of the Copts; Maximos V. Hakim, Patriarch of Antioch of the Catholic Greek Melkites; Ignace Antoine II Hayek, Patriarch of Antioch of the Syrians; Nasrallah Pierr Sfeir, Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites; Paul II Cheikho, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans; Jean Pierre XVIII Kasparian, Patriarch of Cilicia of the Armenians.

#### **Major Archbishop:**

His Eminence Cardinal Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky, Major Archbishop of Lwow of the Ukrainians.

Metropolitans outside the Patriarchates of the Catholic Churches of the Oriental Rite:

His Eminence Cardinal Paulos Tzadua, Metropolitan Archbishop of Addis Ababa of the Ethiopians;

#### **Their Excellencies:**

Most Rev. Benedict Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan Archbishop of Trivandrum of the Syro-Malankarese; Most Rev. Maxim Hermaniuk, Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg of the Ukrainians; Most Rev. Stephen J. Kocisko, Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh of the Byzantine Rite; Most Rev. Antony Padiyara, Metropolitan Archbishop of Ernakulam; Most Rev. Stephen Sulyk, Metropolitan Archbishop of Philadelphia of the Ukrainians; Most Rev. Joseph Powathil, Metropolitan Archbishop of Changanacherry of the Syro-Malabarese.

### **4. Cardinal Sidarouss Expires**

Stephanos Cardinal Sidarouss, Patriarch Emeritus of the Coptic Catholic Church, died at the age of 83, in Cairo. There are about 200,000 Coptic Catholics in Egypt. Cardinal Sidarouss became Patriarch in 1958, and resigned in 1985.

### **5. New Chaldean Church Dedicated**

On Saturday afternoon, September 12th, 1987, Bishop Ibrahim N. Ibrahim of Detroit, U. S. A., dedicated the new St. Paul Assyro-Chaldean Rite Catholic Church. Besides the large crowd of laity present at the function, there were also many Chaldean, Byzantine, Latin and Assyrian Apostolic clergy. Most Rev. Joseph Garms, Chaldean Archbishop of Baghdad and the Most Rev. Thomas V. Dolinay of the Byzantine Rite Eparchy of Van Nuys assisted at the dedication ceremony.

### **6. Pope speaks for Eastern Rite Catholics**

Pope John Paul II, in a talk to 18 bishops from the Eastern Rite Ukrainian Church on September 29, appealed to the authorities to give full freedom to the Ukrainian Catholics in the Soviet Union to openly worship in their own rite. The government had forced them to join the Orthodox Church in 1946. The Latin-rite Catholic Church was however allowed to continue. Pope said that the Ukrainians should be allowed to worship "in the faith of their ancestors, in their own rite and in union with their own priests and the bishops of Rome". It is reported that there are about 1.5 million Ukrainian Catholics living outside the Soviet Union, and that about 4 million Catholics may practice their faith secretly in the Ukrain. (Van Nuys News Letter).